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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

PULPIT MIRRORS

EDWIN H. BYINGTON

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BY

EDWIN H. BYINGTON

*Professor of Homiletics in Gordon College of Theology and Missions, Boston.*

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# INTRODUCTION

Turning from the traditional method of giving instruction in homiletics through lecture courses, in 1918 I devised and introduced into Gordon College of Theology and Missions a Laboratory Method.

After using this method for eight years with the students I concluded that it might be of value outside of the class room, if presented as in this book.

Part One is a study of individual cases, "specimens", with casual comments.

Part Two is a development of the fundamental principles, suggested not only by the church services herein described and many others, but also by hundreds of sermons heard, and read in print and in manuscript.

Part Three presents the application of these principles in the actual production of sermons, as the laws discovered in the laboratories are applied in the industries.

I acknowledge with thanks the courtesy of The Expositor and The Homiletic Review in permitting here the reproduction of material from my pen which has already appeared in their pages: from the former, A Challenging Career, Laying Foundations, The Sermon's Structural Steel, The Minister's Christmas; from the latter, The Glancing Blow, The



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Movie Mind, Attaining Maximum Pulpit Power Through Psychoanalysis of Congregations, Through the Spirit of Adventure, Through Authority, Through Preparation, Through Workmanship, Through Intensity.

E. H. B.

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# PRELUDE

# *Pulpit Mirrors*

## A CHALLENGING CAREER

In my memories of youthful days is a blacksmith, a powerful but pathetic figure. As he hammered horses' hoofs he found no use for his unusual endowments which might have made him a marked man. Said a retired professional man: "If I had had his gifts, I would have been famous;" but all day and every day the blacksmith's major talents lay idle.

Subsequent observations have convinced me that he was not an exception. The ditch digger with a wonderful voice, the bookkeeper with a splendid imagination, the chauffeur fitted to organize and inspire multitudes, the machinist with a genius for music, the woman with a warm and radiant heart feeding a steel machine with bits of cardboard! What shall we say of these? Their work is indeed valuable, but, Oh! the pity of it. Even business and professional men often possess valuable talents that are of no earthly use to them in their chosen careers. The tragedy in this era of specialization is not the man with one talent but the man with five, compelled to bury four while he works with one.

There is, however, one sphere of activity which

calls into play more varied abilities than it did two generations ago and more than any other modern profession or occupation. Has a man a logical mind, a retentive memory, a fine imagination? In this career he will find ample use for them all. Does he possess executive ability, business sagacity, knowledge of human nature? These will add to his success. Is he endowed with personal magnetism and natural enthusiasm? How fortunate! Does he reveal a virility that makes him "a man's man," a fineness of temper that appeals to women, a heartiness that attracts youth and charms children? His services will be thrice welcome. Is he athletic? Has he a rich and resonant voice? Is his appearance prepossessing? All these will add to his assets. Is he a student of history, a man of literary ability, familiar with science and widely traveled? The riches of these realms will give him needed equipment. Are courage and tact, patience and perseverance and a sane optimism among his characteristics? He will use them almost daily. Has he a sense of humor, an emotional nature, a strong will, high moral standards—a man of visions and ideals? All will be of value to him. It is true that no one possesses all these advantages but a man may know that whatever of them he does have will be called into action often if he becomes a minister. Many deny that the ministry is "a real man's job;" but exactly the reverse is true. Most employments use a half, or a quarter, or a tenth of the abilities the man possesses, whereas the ministry uses about all.

If a man really wishes to "make the most of himself," to have every bit there is in him count in the vocation by which he earns his daily bread, no other occupation offers the same chance and challenge.

Self development, however, is not all there is to life. The world is more than a mere gymnasium for us. The zest of living depends somewhat on the nature of the task itself. The laborer shoveling ore may take real satisfaction in work well done but he does not have the thrill of the moulder receiving and guiding the metal as it leaps a glowing stream from the base of the furnace. Even more fascinating is the work of the man who fashions the finest of steel into delicate instruments. In reading Pasteur's life you notice his interest in experiments which aimed to preserve certain substances; but that interest becomes eager as he applies these discoveries to the saving of flocks and herds. Even the reader, however, feels the passion that possesses him when he recognizes that they may have a far-reaching influence in lessening the sufferings and prolonging the lives of his fellow beings. The nature of the objects with which a man works do determine to a degree the fascination and challenge of his daily toil.

What then shall we say of the minister? What is he seeking to shape or save? Even the crass materialist, who sees in the human life nothing but the manifestations of matter, must acknowledge that the man who is working with human desires and decisions, with human emotions, ambitions, aspira-

tions, is concerned with the highest and finest elements: while the theist sees him seeking to fan into a flame the divine spark. Call it what you choose, soul, character, personality, the minister is dealing with the most interesting, fascinating substance there is. His work is to shape this "soul stuff" and fit it for all its tasks and possibilities: and he becomes a "master workman" because he is working with the "master substance." For is not character, which he is seeking to fashion, exactly that? From a famous French School of Engineering came the statement that the needed qualifications for a successful engineer were these five, given in the order of their importance: Character, Intellect, Scientific Foundation, Knowledge of Men, Knowledge of Engineering. It is character, the foundation also of happiness in the home, prosperity in business, stability in national life, richness in friendship, without which nothing can be perfectly satisfactory in human life, that constitutes the minister's material. How fascinating to watch it in the making: the varying manifestations of the emotions, the flow and flux of the thoughts, the unexpected decisions of the will, the delicate sensitiveness of the conscience, the push and pull of the physical on the mental and spiritual, the reaction to environment.

The minister, however, is more than a spectator. It is for him to analyze it, to understand it altogether if he can. Then by the truths he introduces, by the appeals and warnings he applies, he must secure the elimination of the impurities, impart vir-

tue's rich coloring and hasten the crystalization of noble purposes and fine services. All these efforts are doubly challenging because he is not dealing with slave substances, that cower and yield under the lash of physical laws, but with freeborn forces, ever able to interject counter factors. How can any one say that performing chemical experiments, or working with any material, or plant, or animal, or even the human body, or intellect, is as fascinating and challenging as the minister's work with human personality, body, mind and soul, in its marvellous, bewildering and supremely important reactions!

Working with the finest material, however, may grow irksome. Hammering gold leaf day after day becomes deadly dull. In every occupation, including the ministry, details absorb much time and routine reigns. Variety may relieve the monotony but cannot supply zest and delight. What can? The statement that man was made in the image and likeness of God follows not a manifestation of his holiness or love but of his creative activity. Likeness to him bespeaks in man's mind a hunger and capacity for creative work, the nature of which we learn from the Creator himself. Genesis pictures the Spirit brooding over chaos and evolving out of it order and beauty, light and life, seas and stars, plants and animals which had not been before. So when man's mind broods over unorganized material and brings out of it a harmonious whole which never had been before, he is exercising the creative function of the mind. Some occupations call for none of it,

demanding altogether the imitative faculty. Others allow a little. The ministry calls for the constant exercise of this highest function of the human mind. Every seven days the minister must be a creator. Each Sunday he must present a sermon which is neither a reproduction of another man's work nor anything he has done but rather a fresh creation. In a way how like primordial chaos seems his mind at first: texts, truths, thoughts, feelings, impressions, illustrations, quotations, applications, tumbling over each other, without form and void. On the first day a little light appears and on the second the material begins to divide, above and below. Then the theme appears, like the fertile earth, while soon sun and stars begin to shine. Evidence of life and order manifest themselves, with beauty and fruitfulness; and last of all the truth is fitted for men. Fortunate is he if his creation is completed in time for the seventh day and so well done that the Creator above calls it " good." Often, alas! it is a pitifully imperfect creation, sometimes no creation at all but a thinly veiled repetition of previous efforts. Nevertheless here is the perpetual challenge, as each week the preacher starts to walk in the path assigned him. The details and routine of his work are uplifted as his heart and mind leap to their creative endeavor and no occupation that does not call for a large measure of such effort can compare with the fascination of the ministry.

Equally interesting to some is the outreach of thought and life. Once universities and monasteries

were places where scholars and mystics pursued their goals untouched by the world and affecting few of its activities. Both education and religion have broken down the walls. The college laboratory determines many methods at the mine, the factory, the farm and the home; and religion projects its principles of righteousness into these and all other human interests. The modern minister is neither a recluse nor a provincial. He is expected to walk no ecclesiastical treadmill, but to be a knight-errant ready to smite evil or champion the oppressed wherever he finds them on the face of God's earth. How the supporters of every philanthropy, of every reform, of every effort for civic betterment seek him, desiring his endorsement, or coöperation, or the enlistment of his congregation. Often they summon him to positions of leadership. Occasionally he must himself take the initiative and summon supporters. More often he must supply the idealism and altruism, without which existing enterprises will fail to attain the highest goals.

It is true that he does not now hold the exalted position above and apart from the people once accorded to "the cloth." What of that? Let it go! That is no loss if he can be a dynamic reality in the community. Such he is sometimes. Such he can be more often. Never were there more opportunities for him in this direction. No longer may he in ecclesiastical robes speak ex cathedra but he may don the prophet's garb and be heard in the marts of men. He may not assume infallibility but he may

proclaim the messages of righteousness and justice from the everlasting God.

In the wider ranges also he has a place. Modern research has thrilled with its declarations concerning the past, calling upon us to measure the duration of human life on earth not by thousands but by tens of thousands of years, and the time allotted for plants and animals by hundreds of thousands, and the number of stars by millions and their distances by trillions of miles: staggering conceptions which make puny the span of man's life and the sphere of his activities. Yet these conceptions are outstripped by the reach and range of the religious mind. With the expanding knowledge of the universe comes a corresponding conception of God. It is the sovereign of this stupendous whole that the minister seeks to understand and interpret to his fellow men. To discover the cause in any realm is more than to measure the results. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" To attempt this, the greatest possible effort of the human mind, is the minister's task.

Equally does his outlook surpass that of the antiquarian and astronomer in another respect. They stir man with the immeasurable past in time and the immeasurable present in space but the minister's outlook thrills him also with the wonderful onreach of the future—the possibilities of the youth with whom he is so closely associated, possibilities of success or failure, of happiness or misery, of good or evil. As the hairbreadth deflection at the muzzle of the gun determines whether the bullet will reach or

miss the mark, so his influence, scarcely perceptible, may be a factor in guiding those lives to their true goal.

And then the potential immortality of these personalities! Some are confident concerning the future life: others are hopeful; but few positively deny its possibility. Possibility, probability, certainty; there it is. What a challenge to effort! How short these records of the past compared with an immortal existence! How commonplace the unfolding of what man has been compared with the vision of what man may be, either in individual immortality, or in what the race may be on this earth, advancing toward a golden age where righteousness and justice and peace shall reign. Whether he watches the young people starting out in life or stands by the bedside of the dying the minister is as one beside a cage through whose opened door the bird darts and soars into the sky; and his heart burns within him for has he not been striving to prepare that spirit for its long flight and for the wide and wondrous life it will enter?

Ah! but you are dabbling with the unknown. Give me certainty, cries the agnostic. Certainty! What stimulus is there in that? Whatever can be measured becomes our slave, and living with slaves is a dreary existence. The challenges of life come from the unknown. Attacking mysteries brings real victories. The life Columbus lived as he sailed into the unknown west was impossible for the mariner who never lost sight of land. Undoubtedly the minister

is dealing with the mysterious. Starting with the known, he is ever reaching into the unknown: into the thoughts and emotions hidden in the hearts of his hearers, into the mysteries of human existence, into the mysteries of the divine existence. It is however not a lonely wandering in the wilderness with the hope of stumbling across some fresh discovery of truth. The eternal Christ is his guide. Not to the " flower in the crannied wall " but to this supreme personality of human history does he cry, "But if I could understand what you are, root and all, and all in all, I should know what God and man is. " The mysteries recede, as he studies Christ. Now he knows more of what man should be, may be. Now he moves along further and further into a comprehension of the Creator of this stupendous universe. And this is his task, through this Christ to bring into vital fellowship the finite and the infinite, weak humanity and the mighty God, the erring child and the heavenly Father. What could be more challenging and thrilling than this?

It has appealed to strong men in the past and it makes its appeal now not to the careless and sordid multitude, but to the ardent and heroic spirit, summoning it to a career which has in it, more than any other, the fascination and challenge of self-realization, of value to humanity and of hastening the consummation of creation, which is the Kingdom of God.

# PART ONE

## PULPIT MIRRORS

*O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us*
*To see Oursels as ithers see us!*
*It wad frae mony a blunder free us,*
*An' foolish notion:*
*What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,*
*An' ev'n devotion!*

ROBERT BURNS.

## IN HIS STEPS

It was a vesper service, a real one. The vested choir of fifty students sang for their processional "Abide with me; fast falls the eventide." The other hymns were equally appropriate to the hour. The choir selection was devotional, of the meditative type, and was sung with spiritual expression. The sermon was delivered with a quiet earnestness that befitted the theme and harmonized with the whole service.

The preacher was a brave man. Being a clergyman of national reputation, and having before him a congregation of between four and five hundred college women with a sprinkling of professors the natural inclination must have been to preach an intellectual sermon, one of his best, something worthy of his reputation and something only a college audience could appreciate. He however followed in the steps of Jesus, the great teacher. He preached a parable, and did it in this wise. He began by describing a scientific experiment explained to him by one of the greatest botanical authorities in the country whom he mentioned. It consisted of the disintegration of wood fibre in a vacuum crucible, with the result that the most "durable" element proved to be, not what the roots had obtained from the soil but

what the leaves had secured from the invisible air, the carbon. He used this not as an introduction, but as the foundation, building his sermon upon it and according to it, and constantly referring to various aspects of the experiment during the progress of his sermon.

He alluded to their studies, their athletics, their social opportunities as the soil from which they must draw as roots do, if they would live and thrive in that college, but said that they also must draw from the invisible atmosphere of their environment, especially the spiritual, and that what they thus drew would be the most durable element in their lives. One illustration will indicate his point. He said that he had taken a course with Professor James at Harvard and added: " I cannot now remember anything that he taught me but I know that my life has been different because for one year I breathed the spiritual and intellectual atmosphere of Professor James' classroom. " No parable of Jesus follows more closely the originating incident than did this parable.

It is strange that the followers of Jesus do not walk in his steps more when preaching. We do preach parables to the children but when we face adults we are afraid. The parable sermon is so simple, we fear for our reputations as learned men, fear that our congregations will resent what seems to them an underrating of their intellectuality. Are we right? Are we wise? What is better for a vesper service than a parable?

This sermon fitted the hour, the season, the place,

the congregation so perfectly that it could not be repeated exactly as it was given then. It was not particularly a woman's sermon, but there were many deft touches that made it fit perfectly. Had he preached it at the morning service in that chapel some changes would have been necessary; others would have had to be made if he had been at this college in the midwinter or before commencement, instead of at the opening of the college year; still others if it had been a woman's college with compulsory church attendance instead of voluntary as in this institution; still others if it had been a men's college; with marked differences if he had been preaching in his own church.

A perfect sermon can be preached only once. Being altogether adapted to the situation and no two situations ever being exactly identical, when repeated it would no longer be a perfect sermon for it would not perfectly fit the second situation. If it would continue a perfect sermon, it must be altered at every repetition so as to be adapted to the new environment. Sermons which are preached over and over without real changes may be good but for none of the occasions are they the best possible.

## ABILITITIS

THE sermon would surely be taken for what it was worth, neither more nor less. The preacher was a stranger to the congregation which was influenced neither by affectionate loyalty nor by unfair prejudice. They knew that he had an excellent position but he was without any reputation that would raise expectations. The devotional services, in which he did not participate, were neither markedly dull nor spiritually quickening. The preacher seemed to have nothing to help and nothing to hinder him.

As he stepped forward, the impression made was favorable. While not of commanding presence, he was of good size, and well built with a bearing that indicated virility. He had a frank, open face that revealed both kindliness and courage. The advantage of his personal appearance was increased as he began to speak. His enunciation was distinct and his voice was unusually pleasing and effective. It seemed to be under perfect control, now quietly conversational and intimate and a moment later strong with a compelling urgency. It was keen in sarcasm and sympathetic in the tenderer passages, and its well modulated tones ever responded to the thought and feeling to which he was giving expression. Fully as marked was his fluency in speech, the words flowing freely with as little effort as a stream shows.

The text was novel, the theme challenging and what a treat was that introduction! He told a familiar Bible story using wonderfully a vivid imagination. The scene moved before us like a panorama. No painting, no masterpiece of moving pictures could have made it more real. We were all held spellbound.

He passed to another Bible incident. Again that captivating voice, that fluent diction, that brilliant imagination. The second picture was as wonderful as the first, but the reason for its introduction was not apparent for there seemed to be no connection between the two incidents. Perhaps, like some novelists, he was introducing entirely separate groups in the first part, that in the last part he might link them together in a climax.

Then came another strikingly pictured story from the Bible and another. Regretting that so little time would be left for the development of the interesting theme he had announced, I glanced at the congregation and noticed that their attention was flagging. They were losing their interest. Still the imagination continued to play, the mellifluent sentences flowed on, the voice rose and fell in beautiful cadences, as scene after scene was pictured, until he swung into an earnest closing appeal. It fell, however, on an unresponsive congregation for few were now listening closely. He had lost his congregation.

I was more than disappointed. I was perplexed. Here was a man with gifts which any minister might covet and few possess. Yet he had failed to grip the people, even to hold their attention. It was not for

lack of purpose for that appeared very clearly in his final appeal. The sermon was Biblical and the preacher seemed spiritually in earnest. Yet something was wrong. I wondered whether he was suffering from abilititis.

During the following months I followed his career with interest. He seemed to be in great demand for public occasions and his name appeared often in the papers. I concluded that my surmise must have been incorrect. They said that he was slated for a prominent position which would be his before long. Then suddenly came the report that he had resigned, that he was out of the running for that major position and would go to a far less promising position. A few inquiries from those who knew him revealed that my original impression was correct. It was a case of abilititis. The man's career had been spoiled by his great natural talents.

He evidently had early discovered that with his splendid voice, spontaneous fluency and imaginative gifts, he could make an impression with little effort. Not always did he rely on them as largely as in the sermon that I had heard but he depended on them very much. Why should he work hard and dig deep in the preparation of his sermons? Why wrestle with refractory themes and spend time in difficult exegesis or baffling analysis? Why struggle to think things through and build symmetrical sermon structures, when so easily he could paint pictures and thrill hearts?

The fact is that abilititis, the excessive reliance on

natural abilities and their abnormal development, is a common and dangerous homiletical disease. Many ministerial careers have been checked in their onward and upward course by it. If a man has any unusual talent, that at once becomes his danger point. It is ever the tendency of human nature, even though consecrated, to follow the path of least resistance. To do the thing at hand in the easiest way, which is usually the laziest way, is to do it along the line of our natural abilities. Any other path is so much more difficult and so much less satisfactory that we avoid it if possible.

Moreover we are proud of our special talents. By using them we secure more praise and in this way we most easily surpass our fellows. Therefore we bring them into play on every possible occasion, to the neglect of other less marked or less developed gifts that we have. Their use becomes habitual. We indulge to excess. We become their slaves.

The man with a remarkable memory for facts and dates soon overloads his sermons until they become dry as dust. The preacher with a keen sense of humor and the knack of producing smiles and laughter is in danger of becoming a buffoon. He who can tell stories easily and well, for a sermon offers a medley. The mathematically minded speaker moves ever with measured pace, step by step, until somebody aches to do something to make him jump. The exact man is so afraid that he will make an inaccurate statement that he qualifies every assertion until he has no swing to his thought and his hearers fancy

that they are again going through the old Latin grammar with its exceptions and exceptions to the exceptions. Abilititis has many different forms, but invariably it makes people as weary of him as of the inveterate punster and they defend themselves with drowsiness or demand a change.

It is interesting to notice men who have escaped this disease. They appear in other ranks than the ministry. Had Mark Twain succumbed to it he would have spent his life in writing after the manner of Innocents Abroad and the world would not have had the wonderful creations of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. He was disappointed in the reception given to his Joan of Arc but his writing it showed that he was absolutely immune to Abilititis.

I recall a young man, many years ago, who was a real genius. He had to a superlative degree the gift of pouring out epigrammatic sentences, sometimes thought revealing, sometimes cryptic but always interesting and challenging. We expected him to become famous, but he missed the mark. There was only one way to account for it. He exercised his natural ability so often and so much that every one tired of him.

Occasionally you hear it said of a boy or young man that he ought to go into the ministry because he is naturally so fluent, can talk any time on almost any subject in a very interesting way. Head him off, if you can. His ministerial career probably will be blighted by a bad attack of Abilititis.

## WHY DID HE DO IT?

WHY DID HE DO IT? Why did he select for the opening hymn of a morning service an evening hymn? Why did he ask us to sing only the first two verses of the second hymn, when there were only four verses, each with four short lines and the last two containing the soul of the hymn? Why did he announce only a number for the closing hymn, without even honoring it with its designation as a hymn or any suggestion that it was to be sung? He had no reasons. He probably realized none of these things. He did not think. It was another of the innumerable illustrations of the thoughtless use of hymns by ministers. He had spent many hours on that sermon but when he came to the selection of the hymns he picked up the hymn-book and glanced through its pages until his eye struck one that was familiar to the people. "Ah! that will be a good one for the opening!" He never read it through. Then the notices had been rather long. He evidently felt it and as he came to the hymn which followed them he instinctively whipped out his bowie knife and took a whack at it, cutting off the last two verses. When the closing hymn came his mind was not on the hymn. He looked down, saw the hymn number on his order of service. He read the figure. The organ began.

Why Did He Do It? The pastoral prayer followed the Scripture reading which was a doctrinal discussion from one of Paul's epistles. Did he shut his eyes? I do not know but the eyes of his mind never left that passage. It shaped every thought, every feeling, almost every expression of that prayer. As a squirrel leaps from one limb to another, without leaving the tree, without coming to the ground, so he never came to earth, never came near our lives, never touched on daily experiences, until the last half of the last sentence of his prayer when he referred to " those sick in body." The sermon which followed told us about that same doctrine, so we had it three times.

He yielded to the temptation that always appears when the pastoral prayer follows the Scripture reading, which usually is selected with reference to the sermon. The Scripture and sermon are the teaching part of the service and may well come closer together. The prayer is part of the worship and kin to the hymns and anthems. If the prayer follows these in the first part of the service, it is more apt to have the real spirit of worship and less apt to be a discourse in disguise.

Why Did He Do It? When he came to the pastoral prayer, not a motion of hand or head, or eyes, indicated that he was about to pray. Later, after he had been preaching about twenty-five minutes I found myself puzzled and then discovered that he was well launched on his closing prayer. He had been talking to us. He was now talking to God;

but not a word or sign or tone of voice gave the least indication of the transition. Why did he do it?

One thing, however, he did well. He knew how to preach a doctrinal sermon. It was a good one, worthy of that small New England city, the county seat, worthy of any Christian community. He had a difficult theme and told us so. Every effort should be made to have a doctrinal sermon clear and interesting. He accomplished both.

He used illustrations that illustrated, most of them from common life. One was the tree whose dead leaves cannot be removed even by the most violent winter storms but will fall when the new life of the spring comes up to form the new leaves. He narrated a very interesting incident in the life of the painter Millais. It was easy to follow him and to see what he meant.

Then he gave vivacity and challenge by asking questions and after a moment's pause, answering them. Very few sermons have I heard in which questions were put and answered, with a "Yes" or "No," as frequently and as effectively as in this sermon. At times the answers were forceful and almost dramatic. It was astonishing how much difference this made in holding the attention and creating an impression with this difficult doctrinal sermon.

That Sunday afternoon I mused with amusement on the conclusions that we ministers reach sometimes as to what brought to the church service people whose presence was entirely unexpected. The occasion of my philosophizing was this. At the close of

this service the minister hastened to the door to shake hands with the people. He greeted us very cordially and asked if we resided in the vicinity. I replied that we did not, having driven over from a town fifteen miles away. "Came over for church?" he said. "Yes," I replied, and after a moment more of conversation we passed out. Unintentionally I gave him the impression that we had driven over expressly to hear him preach. His reply and the expression of his face indicated his surprise and great satisfaction.

The facts in the case were these. On our vacation excursions we had driven through the town several times and it had pleased us. So one Sunday morning we decided to go to church there. Making inquiries at the hotel, we went to the church of our choice but it was closed. We were told of a church on another street but when we reached it we found two almost opposite each other. We turned to one, but as we approached the steps, I glanced across the street and said to my wife: "I believe I like the looks of that other church better. Let us go over there." There was no sign on either. To this day I do not know the name of the preacher nor his denomination; but the cockles of his heart were warmed as he thought of how his reputation must have gone into other towns and that his preaching had such drawing power.

## " CATCH-AS-CATCH-CAN "

PROBABLY no spot in the world offers, in such proximity and variety, studies in homiletics as does the Boston Common on a summer Sunday afternoon. Hyde Park in London probably has larger and more varied gatherings but they are more widely scattered, or at least were when I attended them. The Charles Street Mall runs along one end of the Boston Common and presents a broad, straight walk with turf and trees on either side. Here are held within a thousand feet ten open air meetings. Each group has a license from the city and a definitely assigned position. The services vary in length from one to three hours and in congregations from twenty-five to two hundred and fifty. The total attendance at any one time is probably not less than a thousand and during the afternoon it would be safe to assume that over five thousand persons hear more or less of what is said. In two places one person alone carried the burden, but the others had from two to ten speakers beside the musicians.

The contrasts were very interesting. At one end the Seventh Day Adventists and Socialists were next to each other. At another point the Evangelistic Association and the Roman Catholic were neighbors, while after listening to a university professor on

social justice I moved on and heard a man with a map trying to persuade his hearers that the earth is flat.

Homiletically it was of course a specialized type of persuading through public speech. Everybody stood, some staying a few minutes others over an hour. With the exception of a few supporters that some groups had, the hearers, unlike our church congregations, were there not because of sympathy with the cause, but out of curiosity or simply to kill time. It was far more challenging than church preaching. Could a man gather an audience and how long could he keep them? In one way it was decidedly different from church preaching, where we lose their minds while their bodies remain in the pews. In these services the departure was of both mind and body and thus more apparent.

Every speaker received respectful attention, and many of them had larger congregations than do preachers in many churches in Greater Boston on summer Sundays. What drew and held the people?

One thing all these speakers had in common, and that was intensity. There were none who seemed cold or indifferent. Nothing perfunctory here! Everyone was eager, alert and making every effort to impress his hearers. These men and women felt that they had messages for the people. The message might have been true or false, and the speaker might have caused amused expressions on many faces but he was tremendously in earnest and therefore people listened. With it was generally the evidence of sin-

cerity. A few apparently enjoyed the publicity, but most made you feel that they believed what they said from the very depths of their souls. Those audiences were a tribute not to intellectual power nor to spiritual values, but to intensity and sincerity.

It was interesting to see what a hold the personal element had. The word "I" was a magnet. The "testimonies" at the Gospel meetings seemed to interest. The man who held his audience the best of all that I heard, losing very few while he spoke, constantly introduced his own experiences and observation. He was not at all egotistic but every portion of his address began with such a phrase as "Several years ago I had this experience, &c." or "I knew a man by the name of &c." or "In a place where I lived once were two men who got into the following discussion &c." What the speaker had observed interested them most. The man who lost most of his audience was one who unfolded his message as a proposition; and the Socialist had a scant crowd as he read extracts from a newspaper. Those who preach to the same people week after week cannot repeat the interesting incidents of their lives over and over, but without any question the message in the church also grips the congregation with more power when they feel that it is experiential, and no illustrations from books ever challenge the attention and impress as do those which are the product of the preacher's own observation.

It was also perfectly evident that more people

came and stayed when there was an appeal to the eye as well as to the ear. The two largest crowds I saw were at the Roman Catholic and the Seventh Day Adventist meetings. Both of these had large automobiles, striking in appearance, evidently built for this purpose. Two other groups had charts and strange displays, and they had a good attendance. The most interesting of all was a man who, all alone, gathered and held a good company. He was swarthy, an Italian or East Indian, and was dressed in a striking white costume, with a few little touches of color produced with ribbons. He held in his hand an open Bible, with a brightly colored picture visible. He reserved for himself a space about ten feet square, and as he preached, he moved about this space with a panther-like swaying motion, making you think of a caged animal. He had more action than any of the other speakers, and many people stood watching him as they listened to his peculiar exposition of Scripture. Not far away the audience about a band of rescue mission workers grew steadily larger as a young girl, with dark eyes and a bright red complexion, apparently genuine, and gowned in a dress of the latest style with most of the colors of the rainbow, gave her testimony. All eyes were fixed on her and all listened respectfully, but when she was followed with a similar testimony by a washed out looking youth, the audience began to thin out. There was an interesting contrast in color at the Roman Catholic service, where were two speakers, a man wearing a semi-military uniform

and a woman dressed in pure white, a good specimen of the dressmaker's art.

One of the largest groups on the Mall gathered about a woman of about thirty-five, whose face showed lines of suffering. Her voice was unusually deep, strong, and magnetic. She was no entertainer, but drove home great doctrinal truths, aiming them straight at sinful hearts. All up and down the Mall there was an advantage where with color, costume, action or striking appearance the appeal was made to the eye as well as the ear.

Other factors of course entered in. The Greater Boston Federation of Churches, with its three minister speakers, had none of these advantages. They had a cornet to announce and attract, but all along the line, while music attracted, it seemed unable to hold audiences. This group had, however, a favorable location, the best there. It was close to the path leading from the Common to the Public Gardens. Along this flowed a constant stream of people. By the side of many a brook you find an eddy. Every once in a while some leaf or twig, floating along the stream, is caught in the eddy and forthwith remains there. So here every now and then a passer-by from this current stopped to listen until a very satisfactory congregation was gathered.

It was an interesting study in how to catch men, by attracting, interesting, holding and impressing them.

## A PERFECT SERVICE?

As I came out of the church it seemed to me that I had been present at an absolutely perfect Sunday service. I still am somewhat of this opinion though not as confident as at that moment.

It was at the close of a beautiful June day that I dropped into a historic church, not of cathedral architecture but spacious and noble, with richness of coloring and carving. The restful quiet of the place and the reverential attitude of the congregation encouraged a devotional spirit. The great organ was at the rear of the building in a very high gallery. The organist could not be seen and as he commenced a meditative selection, the music seemed ethereal, of celestial origin. He did not use the full organ, nor any of the brilliant stops. There were no runs, only an exquisite melody with some harmonies that were rich but simple.

After the invocation the choir sang. They were highly paid professional singers but the soprano did not soar nor the bass thunder. The music was melodious, beautiful, a fitting accompaniment to the twilight that had given its benediction as we entered the church.

The minister came forward to lead in prayer. He was of slight build and seemed rather insignificant in

that vast auditorium. Could he fill it? Quietly, easily, he began. His enunciation was perfect. Each word was clear cut, like a cameo, reaching all.

He caught my attention by commencing with a recognition of the day as God's gift to us, both for rest and for the enjoyment of its glorious morning, its noontide splendor, its evening loveliness. He began with the mood that nature had already awakened in us. Then he passed on to a realization of the glory of Him who had made all this and expressed the longing that our spirits might be as pure and radiant as the day. He prayed for the congregation, whatever the motives that had brought us there, and then remembered those less free and fortunate, the sick in the hospitals and others in need of comfort and spiritual strength. It was all so natural, so intimate, that the people must have followed him through to the end. Thus moved on the entire service, hymns, responsive reading, anthems, a wonderful blending of the parts, with nothing to mar its spirit, nothing to distract the attention. There were no notices! What a relief!

As he started to preach I wondered whether he would be effective, for he seemed so impersonal, as had those in the choir loft. It was a great contrast to many services where the singers and preachers are so conspicuous and self-assertive that they absorb all the attention. God is present but it is hard to realize it. We see so much that the unseen continues unseen. Was not this preacher going to the other extreme? Self-effacement, appropriate in wor-

ship, surely would weaken the sermon, where the whole personality must be back of the message, to drive it home.

The sermon was markedly Scriptural. The diction was choice. In every instance the word selected, while never unfamiliar or startling, was appropriate and illuminating. There was no tiresome repetition of words, no colloquialisms, no slang. The vocabulary was rich, though the style was not ornate. The sentences were compact but without the jerkiness of epigrams. Over it all freely played the imagination, with flashes like the glint of the sunshine through the leaves of a tree.

The fine phrasing however did not remove the sermon from intimate touch with daily life for he had numerous illustrations out of familiar experiences, references to rivers and ocean waves, and likewise some drawn from home life. The literary qualities became less noticeable, though there, as he brought forward vital thoughts, some of them original and all significant. No, he did not drive truths home, but he made them so attractive that we wished to receive and retain them. While never exactly personal, he became less impersonal. He evidently was feeling very strongly the vital import of what he was presenting. While he never became impassioned, as he drew toward the close his spirit glowed with real intensity. He declared that righteousness was more than conformity to an ethical code, that it was a spirit and was part of the very life of God. " Can you conceive of the wave apart

from the sea? It is the sea. So is real righteousness born of God." His text being " peace as a river" and " righteousness as the waves of the sea," he unfolded also the true nature of peace and found love the source of both.

The devotional portions and the sermon, in text, introduction, structure, diction, illustration, thoughtfulness and spirituality, were all that any man could ask or expect. Was it a perfect service? That hour brought complete satisfaction to the eye, to the ear, to the mind, to the emotions, to the deepest spiritual nature. Only one thing was left untouched, the will. It was satisfying but not stimulating. There was no urge in it, no challenge. The feeling of content was created but not the spirit of conquest. There sprang up no high and holy resolve to go forth and hearken to the supreme commandment and to love in the days following with a love heretofore unknown. There was a spiritual satisfaction, as when one listens to exquisite music or looks on a scene of transcending beauty, a foretaste of what a soul might have in heaven where all is well, but lacking was the impulse to action, to great endeavor, the birth of a decision. Could it then have been a perfect service?

## A JEKYLL-HYDE MINISTRY

BEFORE the preacher had finished his first sentence I realized that he labored under a great disadvantage. His voice was thin and pitched very high. As the service progressed, however, sympathy for his deficiency faded away. He did not seem to need it.

Nature often compensates for a defect by improving other portions. This young man, consciously or unconsciously, was doing that by introducing certain elements which so supplemented his voice that he produced as good effects as many men with far finer voices. He enunciated very distinctly. It required no effort to hear him. Then he used the retard. If he wished a word to be emphatic, instead of straining his voice to make it ring out, he paused an instant before he spoke it and an instant after he had uttered it, which made it stand out before us as of vital importance. He did not, however, carry this to an extreme, and sometimes spoke with marked rapidity, thus securing variety and contrast.

Another compensating factor appeared in his Scripture reading. He made his voice correspond to the thought, so far as his natural limitations permitted. He evidently had studied the passage carefully and interpreted its meaning to us by intelligent reading. All through the service he made his voice

his servant, lowly indeed but worth far more than many a man's liveried lackey of a showy voice.

The next feature which attracted my attention was the entrance into the church soon after the service began of a large number of young men and boys. This minister had a great reputation in the community for his hold on the young people. He had formed and sustained clubs for them and often took them on hikes. He showed himself a real comrade able to enter into their lives, appreciating their difficulties and understanding their problems.

His sermon was about God, the text being taken from one of the Psalms. I enjoyed it greatly. It had been written with much care. Some ministers love words as some women love jewelry and take delight in displaying them. This preacher evidently was such a one. The words had been selected with discrimination and were used with marked accuracy; but they were far too theological.

The structure of the sermon suffered as much as its phraseology from a lack of simplicity. It was elaborate, with several points and numerous subdivisions. The line of thought was argumentative and philosophical. Before the sermon was half through, I seemed to be the only one interested. The young people were respectful and fairly quiet and self-controlled, but paid not the slightest attention to what he was saying.

The man in the pulpit must have seemed to them as different from the minister they knew on the playground as Dr. Jekyll was from Mr. Hyde. Of

course in the latter case the two appearances of the one man differed morally. Here it was in the ability to understand and appreciate young people and to give them what they could and would receive. He became an altogether different man on Sunday from what he was on Saturday. Then he was one of them. Now he seemed the scholar, the theologian, who knew not their needs, their feelings, their thoughts.

Not often do you find in the ministry the moral-immoral Jekyll and Hyde, but very common is he in other aspects of a clergyman's life. Occasionally appears the minister with the two voices. When chatting with his neighbor he speaks in a perfectly natural manner, but the moment he opens his mouth in the pulpit there rolls forth " that holy tone," almost sepulchral. Sometimes a minister is free and easy in his motions until he stands behind the pulpit when he becomes another man, stately and stiff. There is the pastor who is kindly and sympathetic as he meets his parishioners, but is harsh and severe in almost every reference to human nature that he makes in the pulpit. Quite in contrast to this type is the eminent divine who is broad and balanced in his conception of truth, a man of vision as he preaches but is petty and petulant in matters ecclesiastical and practical. Some are optimists in one place and pessimists in the other.

This is one of the greatest difficulties I have with the students in my homiletical work. The friendly man, full of the milk of human kindness, enjoying life, rises to preach a sermon, and lo! he is austere,

severe, and speaks as though "this world is all a wilderness of woe, for man's delusion given." An hour later in the corridors you meet him a genial, happy, inspiring personality.

All of us are liable, in matters major or minor, to fall into the Jekyll-Hyde habit, but it is not necessary. My mind reverts to two men who were remarkably free from it. One was Rev. Joseph H. Twichell of Hartford, Conn., familiarly known to multitudes as "Joe Twichell." For a year I was in his church every Sunday and in his home every week and he was always and everywhere the same frank, friendly, free hearted man. His bearing always conformed to the occasion, whether in the pulpit, at the young people's meeting, on a picnic, about the supper table, but it was the same man, even to the vocal inflection, gesture, expression, because he was always perfectly natural.

The other was the Rev. Richard Salter Storrs, of Brooklyn, N. Y., with whom I was intimately associated for ten years. I used to marvel at his voice as he preached in his great church or addressed thousands at some great public meeting. It did not differ, however, save of course in strength and carrying power, from the voice to which I listened as we sat chatting in his study, not one quality missing, nothing new intruding. People often praised the wonderful literary style of his American Board orations that thrilled multitudes, but I have heard fall from his lips in prayer meetings and at the dining table expressions as beautiful and as pregnant with

thought as any that flashed in his highest flights of eloquence. No man can be a great orator who is not natural; and the man who is natural in every way escapes the Jekyll-Hyde peril of the pulpit ministry.

## AN OCTAGONAL MIRROR

I ATTENDED these eight consecutive services in a large Roman Catholic Church, situated in a densely populated section of a leading American city, on one Sunday morning, the first beginning at 5.30 and the last closing at 11.50 A. M. " The Upper Church " had a seating capacity of about fifteen hundred. " The Lower Church," a fairly high basement, with a less ornate altar, covered the same area and had the same seating capacity. These were used in the main alternately. The services had been advertised, along with the Protestant churches, in the Saturday newspaper, where the name of one priest was given as " rector," but at each of the services a different priest officiated, eight in all. In every case it was Low Mass, there being no music whatsoever, with the exception of the strokes of the bell at the significant points in the mass. One service lasted twenty-five minutes, and one forty-five. Each of the others varied from thirty to thirty-five minutes. There was a sermon at every service except the first, and as they were all on the lesson of the day I had the unique and interesting homiletical experience of hearing seven different clergymen preach on the same subject, all on the same day and under exactly the same circumstances. I might also claim to hold

the record as a church contributor, at least so far as the number of contributions made on one morning to one church is concerned, for I made fifteen. With the exception of the first Mass, I found at the head of the aisle a man sitting at a table as a collector and money changer. Everyone seemed to be expected to give ten cents. Once I handed the man a quarter and he promptly returned to me fifteen cents. Then at each service a collection was taken. As pennies did not seem to be the order of the day before the close of the services my contributions had totalled a sizable amount though I am not sure whether the celestial record will credit it all to "voluntary contributions."

The attendance varied from about one hundred at five-thirty to full thirteen hundred at eleven-fifteen. Each service was larger than the one preceding it except the one at ten-thirty which was very much smaller than any except the first. I was surprised at this and those whom I asked explained it by the fact that usually this was a High Mass with music and lasted about an hour and a half and thus was less popular. "Our people like better the Low Mass which is short." Here, perhaps, is some explanation of why Roman Catholics attend church more than Protestants. All the people that day could probably have been accommodated at half past ten by using both the Upper Church and the Lower Church; but instead of saying as does Protestantism; "You must come at half past ten for a service of an hour or an hour and a half," they say: "Come at any time be-

tween five-thirty and eleven-fifteen that best suits your convenience and stay about half an hour and we will be satisfied." I had the feeling that if they had been given the only option that is offered Protestantism, there would be a very different story to tell about Roman Catholic attendance at church services.

At the first nearly one third came forward at the close of the service and kneeled in front where they received the communion, the priest placing a wafer in the mouth of each. The number increased at each of the next three, although the proportion of the congregation who took the communion diminished. At the later services the actual number diminished, at one there being only four or five.

At the first the men were in the large majority, but the proportion of women increased steadily until at the last it seemed as though there were three or four times as many women as men. There were few children, and even at the nine o'clock service which was called the Children's Mass they constituted less than one third.

In the Mass itself which is the Communion apparently there was no effort to make the people hear what the priests were saying. Only once did I catch enough words to realize that it was in Latin. They probably relied on the people's familiarity with the ritual and the fact that the motions of the priest and the sounding of the bell indicated the progress of the Mass. The rising, kneeling and sitting of the people at various points were rather confusing to me

at first but before the morning was over I got into the swing of it fairly well.

The congregation joined in some responses, but not very much more than at a Protestant service. The prayers near the close were in English, when the priest repeated the first part of the Lord's prayer and the people finished it. It was the same with the prayer to Mary and some others.

Holy water was used freely at the entrance but as it was Low Mass no incense was burned so far as I could see.

My interest focused naturally on the eight priests. In age they seemed to vary from thirty to sixty. Five of them looked like men of marked ability and strong character. One seemed rather self-confident and self-conscious, another somewhat ill at ease and one rather negative.

All eight gave out notices and read a passage of Scripture. These were identical and in English. The former included a statement of the services to be held during that week and "your prayers are asked for the repose of the souls of . . " and then were mentioned the names of several persons, including a recently deceased priest. The Scripture lesson consisted of the account of the healing of the ten lepers, book, chapter and verses included being announced. The congregation stood during the reading.

Here appeared a very marked contrast to the use of the voice in the Mass. Each priest faced the congregation and spoke with great distinctness. They

evidently were trained speakers and well trained. In every case the enunciation was good, the voice resonant, the ability to throw it forward evident. The two rooms were large and hard to fill but there was no difficulty in hearing. During the entire morning there were very few words that I had any difficulty in catching. In this respect they seemed to me well above the average of Protestant preachers.

The seven sermons, however, interested me most of all. Would they say about the same thing or would they differ? They all had the same theme, The Sin of Ingratitude toward God and the Duty of Gratitude toward Him, based on the Scripture lesson of the day. They all dwelt on the fact that leprosy was a loathsome disease; but there the resemblance stopped. The treatments were individual and apparently original. They evidently were well educated men. In the seven sermons I did not detect a single grammatical mistake or any other, save that one of them seemed rather fond of long words and did not use them all with exactly the correct meaning. They used gestures, some very freely, and all rather effectively. One man had a vivid imagination, and with much action in his delivery pictured the incident of the lepers. Another was quite doctrinal in his presentation. The first man dwelt much on the temporal blessings for which we should be thankful while others spoke more on the spiritual. One carried the comparison of leprosy and sin through his entire discourse. Another made a thrilling appeal, as he urged them to show their gratitude

to God for the forgiveness of any sin by turning forever from that sin, crying out: " Can you imagine one of those lepers ever exposing himself again to the contagion of leprosy?" Every one of those sermons had a clear structure and showed thought. The language was neither colloquial nor ecclesiastical, and marked literary merit was frequently apparent.

What surprised me most was the absence of certain things. As I heard the Scripture lesson, in which the lepers were told to go and show themselves to the priest and as they went were healed, I said to myself that that probably was the reason why the passage was selected and that these men would ring the changes on the advantage of going to the priest. Only one of the seven even mentioned the word priest in his sermon and he did it with no such application. Every word of the first three sermons could have been preached in a Protestant pulpit without the slightest challenge. Had they been taken down in shorthand, and printed in a paper no Protestant would have imagined for a moment that they had been preached in a Roman Catholic church. The fourth man made a reference to original sin and mortal sin as having been wiped out by baptism, which of course would have indicated where it had been preached. Only one referred to an infallible church as one of God's blessings. There was no mention of the pope, no quotation from him, nor from council decrees, nor the church fathers. One

of them gave what might almost be called a Bible reading, to so many passages of the Bible did he refer. There were no flings at Protestantism nor any attacks on any group of people; nor any exhortations to give, or to come to confession or to attend Mass. Every one of them seemed to be trying to make the people before him conscious of the sinfulness of ingratitude toward God and their need of feeling and expressing more gratitude toward Him. There was an absence also of the dogmatic and dictatorial utterances or assumptions of ecclesiastical authority. One priest addressed them several times as *Men and Women,* two of them said *Brethren* quite often, but the common phrase was *My Dear Friends.*

Probably most Protestant preachers would have brought in the associated duty of being grateful to our fellow men in the various relationships of life; but while they drew illustrations of ingratitude from the actions of some children and in other spheres of life, they never swerved from their one theme of the true attitude toward God in this respect.

This may have been due to the fact that their sermons were very short, varying from seven to fifteen minutes. In the longest one two stories were told, one from mythology and the other from modern life, but they were to the point. Homiletically they were correct, following the rule that if the time is short concentrate on one point and drive it home. How they would succeed with sermons of thirty or forty minutes I have no idea but they were masters

of the art of preaching short sermons. They preached as men who had a message and I doubt whether many in those congregations missed it altogether.

## THE GLANCING BLOW

THE appearance of the preacher was striking as he stepped into the pulpit. It was a little country Methodist church, in a community too small to sustain a resident minister. He came on Sunday afternoons from a neighboring town and was their accredited pastor. The auditorium was small, plain, with little of the ecclesiastical about it, there being no stained windows, no organ, not much to differentiate it from a hall. Consequently his figure by contrast challenged attention. He had on a clerical coat and collar such as British clergymen often wear. His smooth-shaven face, clean-cut features and marked pallor, that suggested the ascetic, imparted an ecclesiastical appearance, as though both prophet and priest. No minister in a business sack coat with a variegated pattern, and adorned with a brightly colored necktie containing a scarf pin, could have challenged the attention as he did. The impression of dignity, reverence, and spiritual earnestness which he conveyed made you feel that this was not to be a lecture or a concert but a sacred occasion. He started with an advantage.

However he quickly lost it. He was no better off than the preacher with the striped sack coat, for soon he began to take the poses and use the gestures that

you might expect in a hotel lobby. He lolled on the pulpit. Now his hands were on his hips, then in his pockets, and at times gripped his vest as he strolled around on the platform. The impressiveness of his appearance was largely destroyed by the unimpressiveness of his manner. He evidently felt the pressure of being a " solitaire preacher." The pastor of a well supported church can little realize the strain on the minister of a feeble church. He may have no choir, no precentor, no leading voices in the congregation, perhaps no organist, and has to carry the entire service alone. He is under a far heavier load than the preacher in a large church, where a devotional organ prelude draws the hearts of the people together, a choir sings inspirational anthems, and a great congregation coöperates. Besides the helpful influence of the music the minister has moments of physical and mental relaxation which enable him to throw himself with freer fervor into the portions that depend upon him. This country " solitaire preacher " from the moment that he announced the opening hymn until he pronounced the benediction was under a constant strain. Sometimes such men make a mistake. Because the available music lacks inspirational qualities, none is secured. If nothing else is possible, mediocre instrumental music will give a little respite to the preacher and release his spiritual power.

The sermon which was based on one of the messages to the churches in Revelation was very informing, showing evidences of genuine scholarship and

presenting the material in an interesting way. Sometimes city people offer as an excuse for not going to church when off on their vacations that the preaching is so poor in the country. My observations lead me to believe that the country preacher as a rule gives as much food for thought as the city preacher, who usually has so many calls upon his time during the week that his sermonizing often suffers, (though generally the city preacher is more successful in popularizing his material.)

This sermon was a strong one, but unfortunately it was a sermon with a " glancing blow." It was a vivid presentation of the Church, ancient and modern, its failures and successes. I thought that it was going to be a splendid effort. How he would inspire that handful of people with the value of this church to the community and with what they might and should do for and through their church. The swing of the sermon was fine, but as he came to the end, he gave it a twist that resulted in a glancing blow. In his application and appeal he made no reference to this church. He dropped the church idea entirely and made a plea for the personal life and a man's relation to his own death. If that was his objective the body of the sermon should have had some bearing on a man's personal relationship to his God, but it did not. A sermon should be so handled that its full momentum should be back of the blow finally struck. The ultimate aim need not be revealed all along the line; but everything, introduction, argument, illustration, should either clear the way for

the final appeal or add to its power. The most unsuccessful evangelistic campaign with which I have been associated was the one in which the evangelist's sermons were usually glancing blows. He would preach powerfully on some other subject and close with an appeal for a Christian decision. In the church pulpit also the sermon with the "glancing blow" is not uncommon.

## TRUE TO THE TYPE

THERE were two men in the pulpit, one elderly, the other a young man. At the appointed hour for the service no organ began a prelude, no processional hymn was heard in the distance, no one in pulpit or congregation moved. About five minutes later the young man in the pulpit arose and offered a prayer, which was very reverent and also restful. His voice was rich and strong but humble rather than assertive. There were several references to the spirit of calmness and peace, to quiet and contentment, contrasted with the surging restlessness of the world without. Here was worship in spirit and in truth, without display, without dullness.

He took his seat. Again for a few minutes nobody moved and not a sound was heard. Then the young man read the Scripture lesson which was one of the Psalms and at the close commenced his sermon. It is many years since I have heard a sermon on the subject he presented which was "Angels." He called attention to the prominence given to angels in the Bible and mentioned some of the incidents dwelling on them. He did not positively assert that they were actual occurrences but neither did he express any doubt or deny them. He interpreted them as the attempt of the Hebrews to explain two things that

seemed contradictory. They believed in a transcendent God, high, holy, majestic, ruling as a mighty sovereign, far beyond them, whom they could not know and understand and whom they feared. On the other hand they had experiences, which they could not doubt, of some divine contact, beautiful and blessed and intimate. It could not be the ineffable, incomprehensible God, but it surely was of him and from him. This, therefore, they described as the visit of an angel.

He then brought the question down to our times. Again he neither denied nor affirmed the reality of angelic visitations to us. He called attention to the way in which modern scientific knowledge had revealed an inconceivably vast universe with a corresponding expansion of our conception of God and then recognized that we also had contacts with some spiritual personality outside of ourselves as real as any of the experiences of life. He frankly stated that we faced the same problems that confronted the Hebrews.

Not combatively but inferentially and persuasively with his "Why not?" appeal he encouraged the hope that there were for us also guardian angels, who were helping and guiding and revealing truth in these moments of our conscious contacts with the unseen and eternal. Then he earnestly advocated the belief that divine revelation had not ceased, that we were not dependent on the Bible alone but should look even now to God for communications concerning himself and his will for us.

After he had taken his seat, there was silence for nearly ten minutes. Then a man arose in his pew and with a few accompanying words repeated a verse of the Bible. A little later came the collection, and after another pause a woman in the congregation called for a hymn, the only one sung in the service. Silence reigned again, until the two men in the pulpit stood up and then without a word walked down into the congregation. There was no benediction and this closed the service.

It was a Friends' Meeting House and a real Quaker service. There seemed to be no regular order, and participation only as the spirit moved, with fully one-third of the time passed in silence. The prayer breathed the true Quaker spirit. The sermon was kin to the fundamental doctrine of their forefathers concerning the Inner Light and reliance on individual divine revelation. In the newspaper advertisement of the day before the leader was designated not as an ordained clergyman but as the "secretary." In what other church at the regular Sunday morning service do the occupants of the pews feel free to participate?

It was true to the type but there was no extravagant or slavish submission. The service, including the periods of meditation, was from eleven to twelve. All parts of a regular service were there. It was not so very different after all. The sermon was carefully thought out and effectively delivered. It was a strong sermon, modern in its spirit and prac-

tical in its application. It is a great thing to be true to the type and yet free, as they seemed to be.

What a pity that this branch of the Christian Church has not spread more widely in this country or at least had a greater influence on other churches! It is what we Americans need, more of its calmness, more of its spirit of peace, more of its recognition of the presence of the spirit of God in daily contact with us.

## THE UNIVERSAL SERMONIC STRUGGLE

THE sermon had been written with great care. It showed deep thinking. It was clear and abounded with felicitous and forceful phrases. The delivery was free and easy, and so natural that it was some time before I realized that he was following a manuscript. He quickly caught the attention of the congregation and interested them both in his theme and its treatment.

The sermon was good all the way through. There was no petering out. In thought, expression and delivery the last part was equal to the first. The result, however, was disappointing, the marked attention given at the beginning gradually diminished and was succeeded by an increasing listlessness. It was evident at the close that he had been beaten in the Universal Sermonic Struggle.

The one inescapable difficulty that every sermon of every preacher faces is the inability of the human mind to give close attention to a line of thought for an indefinite period. A child will listen, where there is no action, only a few minutes. Adults vary. Unless trained or habituated to it few people can give unflagging attention for thirty minutes to an address which requires mental effort on the part of the hearer.

As people listen the tendency of the attention is to

sag. A sermon evenly good all the way through is steadily losing. To hold the attention of the people equally to the very end the sermon must steadily grow in power, becoming more and more challenging to the end.

I remember distinctly my feelings when I first heard Henry Ward Beecher. Being a college sophomore, I expected much from the great orator and was intensely disappointed as he began his sermon. He commenced in a quiet, conversational tone, without any action, making not even the slightest gesture. All were attentive and continued so. There was no flagging of interest during that entire discourse. Why? Because the sermon grew more and more interesting, more and more intense, more and more eloquent. It overcame and more than overcame the inevitable tendency of attention to fall. After a few minutes he used a few gestures which gradually increased until there was much action which toward the end became dramatic. So was it with the imagination that became an increasingly prominent factor. So the emotional element with its appeals we felt more and more. Every orator does this. He does it instinctively.

The average preacher who is full of his subject and very much in earnest often fails through his own eagerness. He does his best in every way in the first few minutes, but the pace is too fast. When he reaches the vital part of the sermon he can rise no higher and his hearers are listlessly waiting for the end.

## A SYNAGOGUE SERVICE

THE interior of the synagogue had much in common with an ordinary Christian church but the symbolic features were different. On either side of the pulpit platform were the seven-branched candlesticks, with electric bulbs lighted. The large display pipes on the organ were trumpets with flaring mouths. Back of the pulpit, under the organ loft, was a doorway, with a curtain concealing what was behind, either side of which was a marble slab, with another across the top. Before the side slabs were richly colored columns. When it came to the Scripture reading an assistant drew back the curtain and brought out something encased in a rich covering, which on being withdrawn proved to be a double scroll bearing in the ancient way the Book of the Law. These two rolls were turned until the desired passage in Deuteronomy was found and then were laid on the pulpit. From this was read in Hebrew the Scripture lesson. Afterward it was returned to its place and a translation of the passage in English was read from the regular pulpit Bible.

I had one surprise. When the first hymn was given out, I was astonished at the volume of song. The synagogue was large. The congregation was small, elderly people being in the large majority,

with very few men present. Yet the singing filled that great building. Soon after that, the response to an utterance by the rabbi came from the choir loft, and a glorious response it was. They had a splendid choir, which was altogether invisible and whose presence I had not suspected for they were concealed behind the curtain of the choir loft. Not once during the service did they appear. It was their rich, strong voices that made the hymn singing so impressive.

The service, following the order of "The Union Prayer Book," was entirely liturgical, there being nothing for the leader to extemporize. It included prayers, words of spiritual counsel, and various responses, in some of which the congregation participated, while others were sustained by the rabbi and choir. Occasionally brief portions were in Hebrew but most of it was in English.

The hymn book contained little or nothing that would have been out of place in a Christian Church and many hymns were by Watts and other Christian writers. The Hebrews have given us very much for our worship and it is a pleasure to know that we have been able to give them something. One that was sung in the service was new to me and rather interesting:—

> At midnight, so the sages tell,
> When David slept profound,
> A harp suspended o'er his couch
> Gave forth a trembling sound.

Up sprang the royal bard, inspired,
His fingers touched the chord,
And with strange gladness in his soul
In psalms he praised the Lord.

At midnight, when dark doubts assail
And anxious fears surround,
O soul of mine, amid the gloom
Give forth a joyous sound.

O bid me seize the harp of faith
And sing a holy strain,
Until each day my life and thought
Resound in glad refrain.

One thing I missed. There seemed to be no special recognition of prayer by any attitude. The prayers all being read, eyes were not closed or heads bowed. Unlike the Christian liturgical churches, there seemed to be no kneeling. In some places the congregation stood up but that seemed to be an honoring of what was being read, rather than a sign of prayer. Afterward it occurred to me that their course was not so different from non-liturgical Christian services. When we read a prayer from the Bible or sing one in the hymn book we give no outward sign that we recognize it as a prayer. We bow the head only when the prayer is extemporaneous and this service seemed to have no extemporaneous prayers.

The liturgical portions occupied about fifty minutes and then came a twenty minute sermon. The preacher announced no text, though he referred later to the Scripture passage he had read which evidently

had been selected for the sake of the sermon. He wore no pulpit robe, though in a building so ecclesiastical and with a ritual so stately it would have seemed more natural than the suit he wore.

The leader's conduct of the liturgical service had been most effective. It neither dragged nor galloped. His voice was clear, his enunciation distinct and his reading devotional and interpretative. It showed how a repeated liturgy could be made interesting and spiritually significant.

When it came to the sermon his bearing changed for the worse. He at once leaned on the pulpit, much of the time both forearms resting on the pulpit with hands clasped. He bent forward in a most earnest manner as though pleading with us. There was no occasion for this. The first part of his sermon was impersonal, a clear and strong intellectual presentation of his background. When then at the close he came to his final personal appeal this pertinent position had been before us for so long a time that it had lost its power. Had he stood upright at first, creating an impression of strength, as he did in the liturgical portions, he would have inspired confidence in his utterances and made possible a more persuasive appeal at the close.

The sermon was carefully thought out and very challenging. It was well expressed, with many telling phrases. He also indulged in alliteration, and did what few can who practise this form of speech, he used it with moderation. Some of its devotees become as tiresome as an inveterate punster.

His first part was an arraignment of democracy. He said that leadership by democracy was leadership by mediocrity. If the few great minds and souls do not lead and dominate the common mass of humanity, the path of the race will be downward and not upward. As he developed this to an extreme, with illustrations and arguments, I wondered where he was coming out. Then quickly he swung into his main theme that in the moral and spiritual realms in religion there must be the democracy of equality and nothing else. Before God there can be no difference. All are alike. "When religion leads to an aristocratic club, it loses its religious quality." It was an earnest plea and a brave one for an essential fraternity, in a world of inevitable inequalities in power and leadership.

As I noticed the small size of the congregation on that Saturday morning and studied its make-up I could not help thinking how easy relatively is our task. The Christian minister complains of how much there is that keeps people away from church on Sunday morning; but think of the poor rabbi the majority of whose people are held in the inescapable grip of employment on Saturday morning!

## THE MOVIE MIND

THE large Baptist church was crowded to capacity before the appointed hour and an expectant spirit could be felt. It was no perfunctory gathering but an assembly with desire and earnestness, an ideal congregation, a splendid opportunity.

The people were treated over-generously, fully an hour elapsing before the preacher arose to announce his text. The outstanding feature of the hour was a variety in which the various parts seemed at variance with each other. There was a solemn and impressive baptism and also a long collection appeal that consisted of " jollying " the congregation with funny stories; the singing of popular gospel hymns with ardor alternated with classic solos; noble organ selections were followed by colorless violin pieces, the whole making somewhat of a medley.

True worship is indeed sometimes inspired by the hearty singing of gospel hymns even when accompanied by rescue mission handclapping. Likewise is the heart wonderfully uplifted at a solemn and stately cathedral service. But the wisdom of combining the two is very doubtful. On this occasion, after the gospel hymns (which were sung heartily) the baptismal service, the Scripture reading, and the prayer, the congregation seemed to have reached an unusual

height of spiritual receptivity and responsiveness, from which they then began to descend, not to return. What followed before the sermon not only distracted the mind but so protracted the service that the preacher found himself seriously handicapped.

He had a difficult task. Could he catch and hold the attention of this weary congregation? The odds were against him. He realized it and threw himself into the attempt with an ardor that aroused my admiration. Whatever his ordinary method and whatever the real caliber of the congregation, he evidently judged that the people before him were now in the "moving picture frame of mind." People go to the "movies" when they are tired, troubled, or restless, and wish to have their attention taken without any effort on their part. He had an interesting text, a challenging theme and used illustrations very freely, evidently drawing some from other discourses and inserting them here, but he could not have held our attention had it not been for two things: imagination and action.

The incident which supplied his text was pictured with dramatic vividness. Everybody saw it as plainly as if it had been on the picture screen. The same was true of every incident and illustration, Biblical or otherwise. His gestures were frequent but none of them were of the pump handle or hammer type. They were graceful, forceful, interpretative. It was not acting, but action. He did his very best — body, mind, and soul.

Some ministers in the pulpit give the impression

that they are " loafing on the job." They put about as much vim in their preaching as the ordinary city laborer does in raking up autumn leaves. One of the ablest and finest ministers I know never had adequate promotion because he never exerted himself in the pulpit and gave the impression that he did not care. It is easy enough to say sneeringly that " perspiration can not take the place of inspiration;" nevertheless the minister in the pulpit as well as the athlete on the field should exert himself to the utmost to attain his goal.

Granted that there was too much pictorial illustration and too little thought development and that the spiritual value of the sermon was not very great, still this preacher managed to keep the doors of their minds open enough to slip in some truth — much more than if he had shoveled an abundant supply of doctrine against doors closed by weariness and locked by drowsiness.

The fact is that we have to take into account rather often the " moving picture mind." The great majority of people attend the " movies " which create a certain mental attitude. Every congregation has a few such people and in some they form a large proportion. To reach them, there must be picturing with the imagination. This is not necessarily a lowering of our standards. Imagination is one of the noblest activities of the human mind. It is prominent in many parts of the Bible. It is the creator of much of the choicest literature. The pulpit of to-day should have more imagination for the in-

creasing number of people who can not be reached by logical processes and must have word pictures. Not less essential is action. The greatest orators and preachers have relied much upon it. With them it may have been optional. With us it is becoming more and more a necessity if we are to impress the truth on the " moving picture mind " which this age is developing so rapidly.

## THE CALL OF THE BELL

We hesitated uncertain which church to attend as we stood on a street corner, in a charming New England town. Then the church bells began to ring and that settled us. The one on the left clanged out harshly. The one on the right called with silvery notes that seemed in harmony with the beautiful scene about us. We turned to the right.

As we approached the church the charm of the bell was supplemented by the grace of the spire. We found that it was the oldest church building in that part of the state, designed by Bulfinch. Within were pews, each with its little door which was opened to let you in and closed behind you. The tinting of the walls was delicate and the flowers in front of the pulpit were not bunched or made a mass of color but were arranged with exquisite taste.

The organ began its prelude which was a choice devotional selection played with real expression. Before a word had been spoken, the loveliness of the location, the sweetness of the bell, the grace of the spire, the soft delicate coloring within and the charm of the organ music had created a spirit of worship.

The minister felt it too. We had a devotional half hour with him and if there had been no sermon, we should have left spiritually refreshed and satis-

fied. The sermon, however, was a strong one. I have heard in recent years six metropolitan preachers of the same denomination as this man and but one of that number gave a sermon the equal of this discourse. It was very able alike in spiritual and literary qualities. What impressed me most was the daring he revealed. Wishing to give illustrations of spiritual devotion to unselfish ideals, he selected three. What audacity to group thus Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, John Wesley, founder of the Methodists, and Jane Addams of Chicago! His imagination also was very bold. Speaking of a type of personality, the noblest, he cried out: " Surely the Creator must have used both hands when he fashioned out of the dust of the earth a body for such a soul." Later, in a bold flight of the imagination that was thrilling he pictured the first living organism on this earth and soared as he described its battles with the heat and cold and the raging of the elements and its glorious triumphs. Alike in literary grace, intellectual development and spiritual passion, it was a rare sermon, perhaps a great sermon.

Often as I sit in small churches I ponder thus: — "Why has not this man a larger opportunity? Why is he preaching to a score or two, when he should be preaching to a hundred or two, or a thousand or two?" Not twenty miles from this church I heard a minister preach a thoughtful and spiritual sermon to a pitifully small congregation in the weakest kind of a church. In that case the reason was perfectly plain. His English was incorrect. He made gram-

matical blunders at every turn. No church, especially if there were any school children in the congregation, would take him if they could get anybody else. This case was different. Here were two difficulties. The first was physical. He seemed weak, and the weakest part of him was his voice. It had some magnetic qualities, but was not well developed nor under good control. He had not made the most of it. It sounded as the voice of a suppliant not as one with authority. He was not masterful. There was no suggestion of power.

The other difficulty was that his supreme, yes, his sole interest seemed to be in his theme. How he believed in it! How he battled for it! He wished us to see it as he saw it, but it was that the theme might be honored not that we might be blessed by it. He did not seem to care about us so much. His concern was not for the people, but for his subject. However much men may admire fine work in the pulpit, what they want for their own minister is a man who is above all things tremendously interested in them and their welfare. Such this man seemed not to be.

## GROWING YOUNG

"GROWING YOUNG" was the alluring theme that led me to attend a church of the Christian denomination, even though in that large city were many other opportunities for worship which were nearer. The sermon began in a very natural way. The preacher described the little child's eager desire to be older, as old as some much admired friend; the indifference to the age question of adolescence which is wrapt up in the present; the reluctance of the twenties and thirties to have the birthdays come too fast; the efforts of the forties and fifties to conceal the advance; the sensitiveness of the sixties and seventies, and the pride of the eighties and nineties in the increasing years.

Then he began with playful humor and genial sarcasm to describe the great satisfaction felt by many people when taken to be younger than they really are and the efforts of many to make themselves look young. He referred to the advertisements in certain monthly magazines of pomades, powders, lotions and treatments for concealing the evidences of advancing age and for retaining or restoring the appearance of youthfulness.

He handled his humor and sarcasm finely. Without sting and without coarseness his arrows went

straight to the mark. It was all so true that what he said could not be gainsaid, and it was amusing. That he was not inclined to show off his cleverness was evident because he dropped this tone after his introduction. He seemed to recognize the fact that almost any one can bring a little humor into the introduction of a sermon without any detriment and often very advantageously. It requires much more skill to use it in the body of the sermon without doing more harm than good; but its presence in the closing portions of a sermon almost invariably diverts from the main current of thought or mars the spiritual impression being made. Only quick action can save it and make it effective. It must be short, natural and must be followed instantly, before the smiles have faded from the faces, by an intense and serious application of the point to the theme under consideration.

That man had given one of the best possible introductions for a strong sermon on how we all may retain or regain the spirit of youth; but he evidently had not thought the thing through. Because of lack of time, or indolence, he did not build the structure for which he had made us ready. There we were a company of people, most of us facing from ten to thirty years more of life, with its physical, mental and possibly spiritual decline, longing to keep as young as possible, ready for any suggestions from him; but he gave only directions for securing youthfulness in heaven which made his introduction seem strangely incongruous.

Celestial youth would have made a splendid last point and conclusion. He used it presumably because it was easy, a pleasant and familiar thought. To have studied out and reported how we might fill the last half of life with the youthful spirit which he had led us to expect would have required the use of considerable gray matter which was apparently on a vacation that week.

It was a rather interesting coincidence that the preacher whose theme was "Growing Young" should be the only one for several weeks from whom I heard a Children's Sermon. It was a very good story, interesting to the children and with a pertinent and practical point. Here also, however, was evident the failure to do a good job. He read it, but for some reason he had not made himself perfectly familiar with it. Four times he stumbled on the name of the main character and had to correct himself and twice he twisted two other characters. School children expect better work than that in the pulpit.

Manufacturers do not put their goods on the market until they are finished, but this man did. Why did he? Why do we? Perhaps it could not be avoided; but what a pity!

## DEBORAH

As she came to the pulpit platform, a Congregationally ordained woman, there was neither self-consciousness nor marked consciousness of the congregation in her manner. She moved rather as one intent on her task. She wore a robe, black, of the Genevan type, not unlike those worn at commencement by college girls. This had two advantages. It obviated all distracting consideration of the way she might be gowned and it gave to her gestures added grace and dignity. Women who become regular preachers will do well to follow her example and adopt some uniform black pulpit robe. She wore no hat and the hair, neither drawn down with austere simplicity nor elaborately dressed, slightly tinged with gray, seemed in harmony with her fine strong face.

In the invocation her voice was low, too low. In the Scripture reading and prayer, it was still low but clear and distinct. The words carried much meaning and feeling. The prayer was markedly devotional, real communion with God, having a touch of the mystical. Here is where women in the pulpit can add to the service an element which many men are inclined to let slip in this practical age. It is a debatable question whether women are

more religious than men, but they certainly are more devotional. One woman preacher whom I heard for three consecutive Sundays in her church carried this to an extreme, the devotional element monopolizing prayer and sermon; but more of it than many of us men can supply is needed, and the women often can supply it.

In the sermon her voice was stronger and increased more and more as it progressed. As she approached her climax it rang out with a challenge and became searching and compelling. It did not rise in pitch but grew in power. As a layman said to me afterward, " she warmed up as she went on." Whether it was a deliberate plan or whether her voice naturally responded to the development of the thought and her climactic appeal, her use of it was on the whole wise. Beginning very quietly and in a low tone, she was able to hold the attention through a rather long sermon by making her voice an increasingly effective factor and was able to emphasize and reach climaxes without straining the vocal cords or making her voice shrill.

She was very frank at the beginning of her sermon, not only in stating its purpose but her reason for selecting her theme. She was a supply and said that she expected to "find a congregation of thoughtful men and women, containing many young people and therefore had selected for her theme The Challenge of Modern Life to Christianity."

She said that her text was the underlying thought of her sermon but she did not preach on it. It

emerged suddenly at the close, however, and created an effectively climactic conclusion. Not a bad idea!

Her four points were clear: — The challenge of an increased universe; of a great extension of education; of a Western world attempting to unify the races with an Eastern religion; of prosperity multiplied and diffused. She revealed the heroism of confidence in her faith when she cried out: "If Christianity cannot meet these problems, then it must step down and out and make way for some religion that can." It was a tremendous subject but it was well thought out. At times she was masterful in her treatment, with the virility of a man; and at times she leaped with the intuition of a woman. She was never mannish but she was never womanish, and that is what women must be if they are to win a place in the American pulpit.

To what extent will there be in the future women preachers and pastors? At present the tendency is toward an increase. Naturally this is more marked among the independent churches, wherein a favorable sentiment in a local church or association makes possible ordination. Inevitably it will be deferred in denominations where no woman can be ordained until the majority of the whole body favor it. But with or without ordination, for the present the number of women preachers is likely to increase. How far it will go no one can tell.

This would seem natural because women are entering into most of the spheres of activity heretofore

monopolized by men and it is scarcely to be expected that they would stay out of that realm in which they always have been interested even more than men.

There is one peculiar phase that may be a factor. How far will men follow the leadership of women? That question does not rise in medicine for example or most of the positions now filled by women, but it is vital in the ministry. It has yet to be settled in business, in politics and some other places. The men constitute a minority in our churches. Will that minority grow smaller where the minister is a woman?

In a community, both of whose churches had had ordained women ministers, I made inquiries whether men ever gave as a reason for neglect of the church that the minister was a woman, and was told that they had not done so. Subsequently a man was pastor of one of them and I judge that there was no appreciable increase in the attendance of men. One case, however, cannot settle such a question.

Of course the leadership of men and women will differ and women cannot do some things for the men of the community that a man would do. Will it be much more difficult, however, for a woman preacher to adapt herself to the spiritual needs of men than for a man preacher to adapt himself to the spiritual needs of women? If because of the temperamental differences of the two sexes men would suffer under the pulpit ministrations of women, how women must have suffered in the past two thousand years under the pulpit ministrations

of men. This comparison is not altogether fair, for men are leaders traditionally and temperamentally.

If women are to be a power in the pulpit they must be Deborahs—the conspicuous illustration of the woman who led men. Ruth the Moabitess, submissive, pliable, the clinging type, though brave indeed; Esther, queenly, splendid, but of the coaxing type, will not do.

Deborah, the judge, must have had intellectual power. The woman preacher may indeed have much sentiment, much emotion, be sympathetic, gentle, gracious, winning and winsome, but she must have mental virility if she is to command the respect of men and lead them. Her sermons must be clearly thought out, with a definite purpose, with practical application and a minimum of appeal. A woman preacher's great temptation is to cultivate the coaxing style. Men may do it sometimes, women rarely should.

Deborah was a leader, not an impulsive creature like Jael. She planned and planned on a large scale. She was full of courage and dauntless. Barak in his way was quite a man and somewhat of a general but he said to her: "If thou wilt go with me, then I will go, but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go." This may be an extreme case but men have followed the leadership of women when the spirit of chivalry was combined with genuine respect and recognition of intellectual and spiritual strength in them. The day for Deborah may be at hand.

## SUNDAY SUPPLEMENTS

WHAT minister could help having a feeling of envy as he looked over that congregation? Every seat in the body of the church occupied, and occupied before the organ prelude began! To have the entire congregation the whole time is a rare luxury. Of course there was an explanation for this strange phenomenon. It was a boys' school. Monitors in the gallery began to mark the attendance at the first note of the organ.

How swiftly that service moved! "A mighty fortress is our God" was not sung as a stately and solemn march but as a thrilling battle song. The other hymns did not suggest that the retard was a necessary feature of reverence. When the boys stood up for singing or responsive reading, it was not a leisurely movement suggesting weariness or a superabundance of time, but a quick response to a summons, but there was no lack of reverence. Those two hundred and more boys were as quiet and attentive as any congregation I ever saw. They would resent it and their friends would laugh if I characterized them as devoutly religious and yet they were; but with it all there was a feeling of motion, almost rapidity in their worship. Can it be that we have linked too much the sacred and

the slow? Can it be that youth would be more attracted to our religious services and find them more congenial if the movement of the service was accelerated?

The sermon was remarkably good. The text was "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough; turn you northward." He gave the setting clearly and presented the underlying principles. He spoke to the boys of their successes and said that it was legitimate to think of them, speak of them, take pride in them; but that they should not stay with them too long, should turn northward to fresh endeavor. He spoke of the mountain of their failures, which they should recognize, and from which they should learn, but that they should not brood over them, that the time would come when they had compassed them long enough and should start for the bracing air of the north to redeem those failures by achieving. Thus he went on and applied it to their lives in a sermon pertinent and persuasive.

Then he added a sermonic "Sunday Supplement." It was a photogravure, a fine one. He spent the last five or six minutes in speaking of the universal appeal of the beautiful, in nature, in art and as revealed in human words and deeds. He made an appeal for the appreciation of the beautiful and an earnest summons to them to reveal it in their daily living. It was good but it was a supplement, folded into the sermon but not apparently an integral part of it. Why did he introduce it? A sentence or two indicated that he had been spending

the summer in an unusually beautiful locality. It had impressed him greatly. He evidently wished to transfer some of the inspiration to them.

The value of these supplements to our sermons is very doubtful. In this case, judging from the attention of the boys, more was lost from the effectiveness of the main sermon than was added by the supplement. The sermon would have been far better without it.

These supplements are a great temptation. Some men seem even to be tempted to insert in their sermons comic supplements. Feeling the value of some truth or the interest in some illustration or the beauty of some quotation the preacher adds it before the close of the sermon, a Sunday Supplement which is really a Sermonic Subtraction.

## THE ORGAN PREACHER

WHENCE Hath This Man This Power? In the leading church of the denomination in a large city the preacher was to be the pastor of an even better known and stronger church in another city. He was advertised as a man who not only had wrought mightily in his own community but also had supplied great churches across the ocean and had crowded them with eager listeners. Of course the question might be answered by saying that it was the power of God in him, but in the spiritual as well as the natural realm God's power seems to reveal itself and do its best work if it has the right kind of instrument. Electricity travels better through copper than glass, and accomplishes more through a delicate machine than a bar of pig iron.

His unusual power evidently could not be explained by his thought. The development of his theme was clear, progressive and somewhat climactic; but his points were such as any minister would have thought of and even laymen would have said about the same things. It was not his language, which was good but not unusual. There were no epigrams, no challenging sentences. The imagination was not in evidence. There were light touches of humor.

The first striking element apparent was the physical. He was tall, broad shouldered, erect, with a fine, manly face. Health was there, strength and active vitality. The voice was strong, resonant, with carrying power, compelling attention. It suggested, not insistent authority, but courage, confidence, and a virile persuasiveness. It would, however, have become tiresome, it was so strong. But here was the first secret. He used his voice as an organ is played. Of course his voice was like a three manual organ, and some of us have only a two manual or one manual voice, and a few only a reed organ voice. That is not the point. He used it like an organ. Sometimes it rang out with all the power possible; then again it was used in a normal way; repeatedly its tones were very soft and the whole church was hushed and two or three times it was little more than a whisper and men bent forward to catch his words. He did not play on his vocal cords as a man clangs the cymbals, or beats a kettle drum, or blows a saxophone or thrums a banjo, but as a musician plays an organ.

His language also, instead of following a measured movement, varied greatly, from the conversational, even the colloquial, to occasional stately bits of oratory. His thoughts sometimes were evidently purely incidental and at other times fundamental. His emotions at points were deeply stirred, almost reaching the point of passionate appeal, and yet most of the time he seemed a rather unemotional man. He was an organist, in the use of his voice, his language, his

thoughts, his emotions. It was not in the least artificial, unless you would call an organist artificial who, in playing Handel's Messiah from beginning to end on his organ, refused to play it all with one set of pipes, but insisted in using each moment that part of the organ which would best interpret the music. It is a great thing to be an organ preacher.

There were, however, two other distinct features. There was the human touch all the way through. Some men preach as a boy throws a stone into the sea, sending it high up far above the surface without touching the water until the end of its flight. His sermon seemed more like throwing the stone so that it touches the water and then flies on, and then again and again touches the water, skipping as it travels onward. Every few moments some allusion, or an illustration or an application brought the truth he was presenting into contact with every-day life. Who has not heard sermons that might even be called airplane sermons? We see them soaring above us. We may admire them but they have nothing to do with our lives. A marked contrast to this was the discourse of this preacher.

Perhaps most attractive and inspiring of all was his sane and controlled but buoyant optimism revealed in his manner, his thoughts, and words. He was not blind to sin and error; he did not deny or belittle failures, but he had a large hearted appreciation of what had been achieved. There was little of the pessimist about him. He had an ideal introduction to his sermon on "Has the Church Made

Good ? " It ran something like this. " I once in my travels went to a town named Chester. There on a beautiful little church, which was called a chapel, I saw a sign which read: ' A reward of five pounds for evidence securing the conviction of any one who has been throwing stones at this church.' . . . It is easy to throw stones at the church. Some people like to do it, &c." He evidently was not one of the preachers who uses the pulpit as a place to throw stones.

A whole souled optimism, a heart close to daily human experiences, a body and voice strong and supple enough to give adequate expression to every thought and feeling are factors in making truth popular and powerful.

## THE BURNING BUSH

*(Now Moses led the flock to the back of the wilderness, unto Horeb. . . . And he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire and the bush was not consumed. And God said, Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.)*

We drove for three miles without passing a house or a square foot of cultivated land, on either side the sandy soil being covered with growths of stunted oak and pine. After passing a few scattered houses we came to another stretch of three miles without habitation or cultivation. One would hesitate to call it a wilderness, though the flocks of Moses would have fared badly here and would have bleated for a return to Horeb's wilderness.

Then we came on an oasis, a dwelling with a large garden of flowers, abundant and beautiful, and a little farther on a settlement with several dwellings. By the side of the road stood the little building where services were held. I entered and took my seat on one of the old fashioned settees. For more than three score and ten years this little place of worship had been sustained without any regular church organization, without affiliation with any denomination. At one time the interest and generosity of a single man kept it going. At another the steadfast loyalty of a small group of men carried it on.

Often, perhaps always, a devoted Ladies' Aid Society had seen to it that neither building nor services suffered for lack of care. Much of the time they had depended on irregular supplies by various ministers but now they had the regular ministrations of an earnest and gifted young pastor from the neighboring town.

I had attended a prayer meeting there before, a gathering in which the men were in the majority and where a layman always led, the pastor participating from the floor.

On this Sunday it was easy to count the congregation. There were twenty-four, but what a twenty-four! Twelve of them were young people with an average age apparently of about eighteen. Seven of them were in the choir and one played the organ. The pastor told me that one of the young men desired to enter the ministry. Was that an unimportant pulpit? I have seen congregations ten times as large that did not have twelve such young people with one desiring to enter the ministry. Think of what those twelve young people, all undoubtedly on their way to participation in the activities of the great surging world, may accomplish! How different their lives if they had grown up without the teachings of this pulpit, the influence of this place of worship.

As I rode away from that service I had a vision of a great number, whom no man has ever numbered, out of every section and state of this great country of ours — to be found on the prairies and the moun-

tain sides, amid the cottonfields and the cranberry swamps — places of worship, where only handfuls gather in school house or hall or store or little chapel. They have not the enthusiasm of numbers, they are not thrilled by the evidences of great success, they are not inspired by the prospect of rapid growth. They are sustained, sometimes by a tireless and devoted minister who rides or walks many miles each Sunday, with little or no financial reward, sometimes by a few faithful men and women, sometimes by a band of enthusiastic young people.

Behold, the burning bush that is not consumed! Surely this is holy ground, made such not by stately cathedral or dedicatory ritual but by the flames of faith that cease not, by the voice of God often heard.

We look up to the sky and see the countless stars shining through the darkness and are cheered. Assuredly as the angels look down on this earth, often covered with the black darkness of sin and strife, they see shining these fires that burn and are not consumed, on a thousand hills, in a thousand valleys, on countless plains, and therein rejoice.

# PART TWO

## ATTAINING MAXIMUM PULPIT POWER

*Thank God, a man can grow!*
*He is not bound*
*With Earthward gaze to creep along the ground:*
*Though his beginnings be but poor and low,*
*Thank God, a man can grow!*
*The fire upon his altars may burn dim,*
*The torch he lighted may in darkness fail,*
*And nothing to rekindle it avail—*
*Yet high beyond his dull horizon's rim,*
*Arcturus and the Pleiads beckon him.*

FLORENCE EARLE COATES.

# THROUGH PSYCHOANALYSIS OF CONGREGATIONS

*Advertisements of courses of study often read as though their patrons were sure of becoming millionaires or masters of men. Every one however has his natural limitations. No course can insure a man's becoming a Browning, a Beethoven, a Sargent, a Spurgeon. The ideal for every man is to attain his own maximum, whether that be at the top of the ladder or far from it.*

*Seldom however do you hear a minister who seems to have done that. Usually you observe some defects that he might eliminate, some improvements that he might make, some changes whereby he would become more effective. Occasionally in some sermon he approximates his maximum but usually he falls much below it.*

*How can he secure the pulpit power that is possible for him? It varies with each individual but certain principles are widely applicable, and deserve consideration.*

A British clergyman, a few days after arriving in New England, received an invitation to speak on the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations, then before the United States Senate. The address proved a masterpiece. It was not an exploitation of British views but a marvelously correct recognition of what was in the mind of the average American and an able effort to win support for the treaty. It carried conviction to many and won the sympathy of all. How could he understand us so well and how could he speak with such intensity of feeling concerning our duty without irritating and antagonizing? I learned the secret later. As soon as he received the invita-

tion he gathered about him a group of representative Americans and for two or three hours poured out a stream of questions as to what Americans believed on this subject and how they felt about it. He first studied and learned the mind of America and then framed his address accordingly.

An illustration of the opposite method came to my notice some years ago. I happened to be in New York when a clergyman of national reputation gave the closing address at a convention on moral reform. Many distressing and alarming facts had been presented and his powerful invective and indignant denunciation of evil in high places thrilled the audience. Some weeks later I heard him preach an installation sermon in my own city. He had not spoken many minutes before I perceived that the substance of his discourse was the same that I heard in the New York convention. How different, however, the result! He did not grip the congregation. He did not even interest them. There was universal disappointment in the sermon. There were the same great truths, the same trenchant sentences, the same intense feeling, but no response on the part of the audience, due to the fact that the mood of this audience was entirely different from the mood of the other.

The two types of men appear in almost every general gathering where several speakers are on the program. There is the man who rushes in a very few minutes before he is scheduled to speak and delivers an address that evidently was not prepared with this assembly in mind but for some other occa-

sion or else it was a topic that so interested him that it was a relief to unburden himself.

The other speaker has prepared his address for this gathering or rearranged carefully material previously assembled; but that is not enough. He arrives some time before he is due, trying to size up the audience and to discover its purpose and spirit. He follows closely the speakers who precede him and notes where they are carrying the thought and feeling of the audience. When his turn comes he knows exactly where his congregation is mentally and spiritually and is able to adapt that prepared address to them so as to catch and hold their attention.

This psychoanalysis of congregations probably accounts for some contrasts in ministerial records. One man has in succession pastorates that are utterly unlike intellectually, socially, financially, spiritually, but is successful in them all. Another man after a brilliant success in one field moves on to a complete failure. We say it was a "misfit." Why a misfit? To a large degree, probably, because he did not practise psychoanalysis on his new constituency and adapt his preaching and methods to the temper that he found prevailing there.

Some exercise this ability unconsciously. It is an intuition, born in them. Such was Henry Ward Beecher and such were many less famous men. Some of these would scoff at this kind of analysis and adaptation as absurd as swimming lessons to a fish. Many of us, however, were not thus endowed but must learn, as boys learn to swim. Fortunately it is

one of the arts easily acquired. Of all my courses in homiletics this is the one in which the students most quickly show marked improvement. I describe ten distinct types of audiences and require the members of the class to make addresses which will be especially fitting for each. The attempts at the first are apt to be failures; but the students quickly catch the idea, improve greatly, the last two or three usually showing some fine work.

## Three Attitudes

Very important is a clear perception of the attitude of hearers toward the position to be advocated in the sermon. In general there are three, the concurrent, the hostile, the indifferent. It is true that seldom is the congregation all of one mind. Of course the preacher would like to reach all three at once; but he is about as likely to do that as the hunter is to bring down three wild ducks with one shot. It has been done, but it is exceptional. Fortunate is the hunter who secures one bird with each shot, and so also the minister who successfully wins one of these groups with each sermon. Usually the best that he can do is to determine the mental and spiritual attitude, toward the subject in hand, of those he especially wishes to influence and to adapt his treatment mainly to them.

How shall he handle the subject if the people already believe what he is going to say? After a political speech the orator said to a group of friends:

"I was not trying to win over opponents but to strengthen and stir up our own party voters so that they would not swing away or fail to vote." Such confirmation is necessary in the Church also, and many of our sermons must be of this type, but it is not as easy as it seems. We speak of "gospel-hardened sinners" but even more difficult is it to make any impression on truth-hardened saints. Too often there is a comfortable drowsy concurrence. One of my deacons jokingly said to me: "Well, parson, after you got started on that sermon I saw that it was a subject on which I knew you were perfectly sound and so I thought I would take a little nap." To interest, grip, and move people with accepted and perfectly familiar truths is a hard task. A new approach to the subject, with an entirely new background, is needed to impart to an old theme new interest and impressiveness. A novel or original treatment gives the truth a new chance at the hearts of men. As the moving of the camera a few feet gives a new picture, so may it be with the sermon. Curiosity as to the subject in the development of the sermon may help. Now is the time for hyperbole and startling statements. Intensity is in order. Strong dramatic and even emotional appeals may be made. Sarcasm, rarely pertinent, may here sometimes be used. Denunciation and condemnation ocasionally are desirable. In fact the picturesque, dramatic style that most ministers reserve for the Sunday evening congregation might well be used in the morning if we are to interest, impress, and inspire

with the old, old truths people who know them so well and have believed them so long.

Far different should be the treatment if we are trying to reach those who definitely disapprove of our position, either in real hostility or an unwillingness to give assent and coöperation. To such the hyperbole will seem a lie, intensity mere acting, the novel approach far-fetched, the emotional appeal an unworthy attempt to work on the feelings. Sarcasm, warning, denunciation, will but add fuel to the flames, fanning disapproval into wrath and bitterness. All these do more harm than good, especially where men are divided into opposing camps on questions of theology or social justice.

Instead, common ground should be found, and then a quiet advance should be made, slowly, step by step. Every statement should be so well substantiated as to compel acceptance, all doubtful claims being discarded. The illustrations should be appropriate and free from features that might be misapplied or carried to a reductio ad absurdum. The conversational style is best. Sometimes a little humor helps. The reasoning should be clear and fair. If the hearer says it is "clever" you may know that it has not moved him. Often the attempt to force an immediate assent would be unfortunate. Far better is it sometimes to supply the material and let the people think it out for themselves. The man who thinks of his task as seed sowing is more likely to succeed with this group than the man who looks upon it as a bombardment.

When there is neither agreement nor disagreement but only complete indifference, the approach must be somewhat different. How often, when a preacher is speaking on a subject that seems to him very important, he sees a puzzled look on the faces of many which seems to say: "What in the world are you getting excited about? We do not see that this amounts to much anyway, about the difference between tweedledee and tweedledum." Indifference needs first of all education. They should have the facts that indicate how important is the matter under consideration. Impart information concerning its origin and nature, concerning its history and the consequences at stake. Multiply incidents, illustrations, an array of incontestible facts, in a cumulative fashion. Then clear, strong arguments should follow, for the intellect of the indifferent must be won first. After that the imagination should be given a chance and when that has had its quickening effect the appeal to the emotions may follow, culminating in a challenge to the will. I heard a secretary present a new cause to a congregation most of whom did not care a snap of their fingers for the whole thing. He began with information, some indirectly and some directly connected with the subject. He multiplied his statements, adding illustrations, incidents, arguments, and went on and on and I thought that he never would arrive. The time was nearly gone but in the last five minutes he let off the fireworks and set the whole thing ablaze. I was dumfounded at the enthusiasm created and at the financial response

resulting. The congregation was itself astonished at its own response and never has been able to understand how the indifference of half past ten was changed to the resolute conviction of twelve o'clock.

## Mind Reading

This brings us to the high-water mark of psychoanalysis of congregations, which is the recognition of the successive changes in the temper of the congregation as the sermon proceeds. Wherever the mind and heart of the people may have been when the text was announced, they should have been brought to a point further along the road toward the desired goal by the end of the first ten minutes, and so at the end of the next few minutes and on through the sermon. From time to time the change in their position, their attitude, their mood, may call for a change in the method of the preacher. He has carried them as far as he can with one line of thought and appeal. Unless he changes these they will get no further. When living in Constantinople I joined a company which was going to climb the Mt. Olympus which is in Asia Minor. Our leader took us on a steamer which carried us to a port on the sea of Marmora. There we changed our conveyance and traveled in carriages to Brusa. There we took horses upon which we rode parts of two days up the mountain, but the last part of the ascent was on foot. No one form of conveyance could have brought us from Constantinople to the crest of the mountain. So it is

most important to know how to start the hearer on his journey, and then as the sermon advances to realize from time to time his new position and need. The preacher should realize when ignorance has been informed, prejudice allayed, the reason satisfied, the imagination fully aroused, the conscience quickened, and it is time to supply something else to carry him on farther; also when the moment has arrived to call on his will to make the final effort which alone can bring him to the mountain summit.

## THROUGH THE SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE

PREACHING is primarily an adventure. To the casual observer it may seem like traveling a beaten path, but in reality the elements of uncertainty differentiate it from such an experience. The minister for one thing does not know what manner of congregation he will face on Sunday morning. If the auditorium is chilly, or overheated, or poorly ventilated his usually responsive flock becomes drowsy or restless. Preaching in an educational institution recently on a very rainy Sunday, I said to the headmaster, "Here at any rate you always know what congregation you will have." Instantly he replied: "Not at all. The weather does not affect the number, but it does the mood of the boys, making them attentive or indifferent, responsive or rebellious."

Many other factors have a transforming influence. Significant world events or insignificant local happenings may temper the spirit of the people to a marked degree. In the service itself the crying of a child or the rattling of a curtain may utterly divert their minds; or an inspiring anthem may make them wonderfully sympathetic. Oh! if we only could know each week as we make ready our sermon what is to be the temper of our congregation! But we do not.

Alas! This is not the only element of uncertainty. The preacher prepares a sermon on enthusiasm and, lo! a sleepless Saturday night sends him into the pulpit limp and lifeless. Or his theme is burden bearing, but he finds himself on Sunday so buoyant that most burdens seem trifles. The trouble is that when he is preparing his sermon he himself does not know which preacher he is going to be as he enters the pulpit next Sunday morning, Elijah or Elisha, Jeremiah or John.

Personality is not the only incalculable feature. He selects a text that points in one direction but careful study gives it an unexpected slant that leads him far afield. Sometimes the theme refuses to unfold as he had anticipated and the finished structure on Saturday night bears little resemblance to the vision of the first part of the week; then like the Preacher of old he cries out: "For to every purpose there is a time and judgment, because the misery of man is great upon him; for he knoweth not that which shall be, and who can tell him how it shall be?"

Not by any means are all the possible surprises disheartening. However long our ministry, no truth has been entirely explored. I had spent several summer vacations in a charming spot in Maine, where a river in a beautiful valley winds among the hills. One day a long and hard climb brought us to a crag where we never had stood before. The same hills, the same valley, the same river that we had seen often, but it was a new and entrancing view that thrilled us. So at any time as we work on our ser-

mons there may burst on our vision a new aspect of some familiar truth, a new meaning in some oft studied verse, or some Bible character may stand out before us with new dramatic distinctness like a majestic tree on a hilltop against the evening sky.

We must recognize also another element of uncertainty. We may lead the needy ones to the pool of Bethesda but we cannot tell assuredly that the angel will then trouble the waters with life-giving power, for his visits are not timed by clock and calendar. The moving power of the Holy Spirit is not within the range of human calculations. On Sunday morning the preacher may be as one that beateth the air or he may be thrilled as he is supremely conscious of the Spirit's enfolding presence; but which of these experiences he is approaching he can not tell.

Each week we go forth on an Abrahamic adventure, confident that we are called of God to go forth but not knowing whither we go.

## In Search of Adventure

It is not enough, however, for the preacher to accept with hopeful resignation the inevitable uncertainties. He must be a Columbus, who deliberately and dauntlessly turned his prow westward and thus achieved. Our Pilgrim fathers, pursued by the Anglican leaders, had adventures they could not escape on their way to Holland; but that was not enough for them and they set sail in their frail bark on a far more dangerous adventure across the Atlantic.

Then, and not till then, did they become God's choicest instruments in advancing his kingdom. The preacher who would continue to have the thrill of sermonizing and increase in pulpit power must ever be trying the untried seas. He need not always attempt what never has been tried by others but he should be ever launching forth in something that he himself never has essayed.

Fortunately the good Lord has given to us the spirit of adventure, which may influence us not only in our major efforts but also in minor points. I have seen a freehand artist sketch a face, and then by adding one or two lines change its expression so that you felt that you were looking at another person. So the introduction of a few new elements changes the countenances of our sermons, attracting the attention and arousing the interest of the people, and giving to all concerned a new joy and a fresh inspiration in the preaching. It is astonishing, for example, what a transformation will be wrought by the introduction of exclamations and interrogations in the sermonizing of a man who has not been in the habit of using them. It is like seasoning to a somewhat stale dish. More apparent and satisfying is the use of poetry, especially if the selection be of a dramatic type, in the sermons of a man who has clung tenaciously to prose from the beginning to the end of every sermon. How refreshing the introduction of an appropriate incident, some historical allusion, some scientific fact, or current event, when these have long been omitted from the sermon!

Preaching to the children every Sunday morning a five minute sermon is a rewarding adventure any minister can make. That such adventures are being attempted is illustrated by the following which appeared on the editorial page of The Congregationalist:

"He had been preaching thirty years in the same pulpit and only a few months ago decided to preach a children's sermon before the regular discourse. He thought he did not know how, but put himself to the test. He found that he was equal to the opportunity and found too that the 'grown-ups' as well as the little people appreciated the sermon."

The classic illustration of adventurous change is Dr. R. S. Storrs, Brooklyn's famous pulpit orator, who after twenty-five years of reading carefully written sermons threw aside his manuscript and preached altogether without notes. It was daring, but how successful all know who ever heard his American Board addresses.

When it comes to texts and themes, for here also we cling tenaciously to certain types, an easy way appears in asking people to suggest some they would like to have us present from the pulpit. As a rule they select about the last thing that we would have chosen and that is the advantage of this adventure. Sometimes we feel as though we had been ordered into the desert of Sahara and can only hope that we may run across an oasis somewhere. Once when I tried this experiment a young man asked me to preach on the text: "And the dragon stood before

the woman which was to be delivered, for to devour her child when it was born." I did as requested.

These adventures we should seek not only for the sake of the congregation but also for our own good, for such efforts affect our own natures as well as our sermons. What we need to do occasionally is to turn from the use of those faculties of which we have five talents and bring from its hiding place that faculty of which we have but one talent and use that until it becomes two. It is a good thing to Burbank those of our natural abilities that are limited and as yet undeveloped. Often the prospect of the adventure and the attempt set the preacher's soul, and mind, and body tingling and arouse him to unwonted earnestness and enthusiasm with a somewhat similar effect upon the congregation.

## The Dead Line of Fifty

Youth is supposed to be the age when the spirit of adventure has the right of way. Not so in the ministry where it should be increasingly manifest as the years advance. Some time ago discussion, heated and often bitter, raged over the "ministerial dead line of fifty." Many churches acted as though that marked the end of a minister's usefulness.

Every human being eventually becomes incapable of rendering service and there is a point in his life when he is at the apex of efficiency, from which he gradually declines. For the athlete that point is reached usually before thirty-five. In the ministry

many think that it is about fifty, half way between ordination and inevitable retirement.

There is some ground for this view. After twenty-five years of study and experience the minister has reached certain definite conclusions. He has decided that certain methods are fruitful, others barren, others harmful. His views on theology and on social questions are settled. He now knows what he can do well and what he cannot. His style of preaching is established. His habits of study, his lines of reading, his manner of spending his vacations vary little. He has found what is the best for him and thus plans to move on steadily during the years of activity that remain for him. He is now apt to stereotype and reproduce the work of the first twenty-five years. This starts the decline, partly because he has lost the glow of fresh production and partly because the world is changing. In my youth I heard an old professor complain bitterly of the indifference of the students to the very lectures that had aroused the greatest enthusiasm among his earlier students. They were the same lectures but they were given in a different world. The student mind and spirit had changed entirely, while he had changed little and the lectures none at all.

We cannot avoid the decline. It is inevitable; but we can check its progress by the spirit of adventure. Every year after he is fifty a minister should have something in his life that never was there before. I heard recently of a minister who had spent his vacation every year for fifty years in the same place.

What a way to accelerate the decline! Another minister who, approaching three score and ten, is still powerful, spends every summer vacation in a region new to him. Of course vacation variety is not the only thing. There are many lines in which his spirit may move, only it must be where he has not been before and where there is inexperience, novelty and some uncertainty. It may be joining a fraternal organization, or writing for the newspapers, or getting up a popular lecture, or becoming a Rotarian, or accepting an ecclesiastical office. An adventure in one line often has a quickening effect on the whole personality. Whatever the adventure, it should be allowed to come in contact with and influence the sermonic life and habits so that it may impart to them real freshness and vigor.

Each year there should be taken up some line of study that is entirely new territory — philosophy, biology, history, astronomy, comparative religions, sanitation, anything, if only it is unfamiliar. It requires great will power to introduce some method of church work that we never have used. Still harder is it to make an adventure in sermonizing. To take up a series of expository sermons when for thirty years topical sermons have been preached; or to attempt then for the first time sermons making much use of the imagination seems hazardous. So it is, but unless there is some risk it is not an adventure. There is nothing better than adventurous attempts to delay the inevitable decline and defer the crossing of the ministerial dead line.

## THROUGH AUTHORITY

THAT the authority of the pulpit has waned all agree. Similar decline appears however in almost every realm of life, but here it has been accelerated by the separation of church and state and by the rising influence of the laity.

It is recognized that authority is usually a composite, partly official and partly personal. In the case of the pulpit the loss has been mainly official while authority through personality has greater possibilities than formerly and every effort should be made to attain it.

In any discussion of this subject the significance of the zones about a minister must be kept in mind. Every pulpit has authority over the first zone which includes the loyal and devoted spirits to whom its every word is law. The second zone includes the people who are independent, but sympathetic and ready to yield to authority if reasonable. In the third are the indifferent, with whom only a strong personality and a compelling presentation become authoritative. The fourth is occupied by the hostile, who deny the preacher's premises, challenge his primacy, and yield only when unable to escape. The task of the minister is to make his message authoritative in all these zones. He can do it easily in the first. In each succeeding zone the task becomes

more difficult, but success more significant and important.

Dogmatism undoubtedly increases authority in the first zone, whether the church be conservative or liberal; and when controversy with others arises, the more dogmatic the leader the greater his authority here; but dogmatism diminishes authority in the second zone, makes it improbable in the third and impossible in the fourth.

### Reliability

Reliability of utterance is the foundation for personal authority. Without this the preacher may be interesting, popular, and measurably influential, but can not be really authoritative. Omniscience is not expected, even extensive knowledge is not necessary, but accuracy is. The minister who exaggerates loses. If he is so fulsome in his praises that people say "he does not half believe what he says;" if his claims about success must "be taken with a grain of salt;" if his denunciations need to be discounted; if his statements of facts sound suspicious, his stories and other illustrations improbable, his arguments specious, his judgments prejudiced, the authority of his pulpit becomes negligible.

If on the other hand the people find that the minister's statements are substantiated by investigation, that his promises are fulfilled, his warnings justified; if each layman perceives that when he does mention some thing in his line it is correct, the preacher's words will come to have great weight.

Reliability accomplishes much, but when reenforced in either or both of two ways it accomplishes much more.

### Representative Utterance

I. It requires rare genius or a phenomenal success to enable a man to become a compelling authority in and of himself, especially among those who are familiar with the subject. This is a day of intellectual and spiritual as well as political democracy. "One man's opinion is as good as another's" is the popular philosophy. The power of some very mediocre men can be accounted for by the earnest and impressive way in which they make the people feel that their utterances are not personal but representative. They may declare that these statements are the beliefs of the Church, or the teachings of the Bible, or the views of leading commentators, or the convictions of the leading evangelists, or the positions of modern scholarship, or the claims of the scientific world, or they may assert that here is a message from God himself.

We should not make of ourselves mechanical mouthpieces for majorities or arrogantly assume infallibility in speaking for God; but when we utter a truth which we sincerely believe has back of it many minds and hearts and is the revelation of God, we err in placing under it no other foundations than our feeble hands have fashioned. A pulpit proclamation flashes out with increased authority when it

is sent forth not as an individual opinion but as a representative conviction. The glass in the rear lamp of an automobile is always red, but it has a new glow and becomes authoritative when the electric current leaps into it.

### Independent Utterance Through Experience

II. A second element which increases the authority created by reliability seems the very opposite of the first. It appears when a man is proclaiming an independent discovery. In college I was called upon one day to give a chemical formula. This I did correctly and was indignant when the professor exclaimed: "You think that you know that. You do not. Sit down." Some days after that in the laboratory I happened to be performing the experiment described in that formula, when a hand touched my shoulder and the professor's voice said: "Now you know it." The creeds the preacher recites, the message that he gives may be as true as that formula, but when he has wrought them out by himself in his own experiences they become his own in a new and peculiar way. Dallas Lore Sharpe tells how, when he was fourteen, in a class in school was brought out the fact that mistletoe grows in the South on gum trees. He at once exclaimed: "We have gum trees here in New Jersey. Does mistletoe grow here?" The teacher replied: "Go and find some and be the first perhaps to report the plant in your native State." He describes his eager and suc-

cessful search and then adds: "No, I don't suppose I was the first to report mistletoe in New Jersey. But I was the first to report it to my teacher and to the class and to my own soul, which is more important. I was not making a new adventure, but making an old adventure new, rediscovering the mistletoe, as daring an experience as the original discoverer had."

This entering into ownership of truth by right of discovery may come through hard study and earnest thinking, or by wrestling with doubt and emerging triumphant, or by experiencing life's struggles, sorrows, sufferings with Christian fortitude. However it comes, it adds something vital. When the preacher speaks of something he has discovered for himself, he does not need to announce it as such. The truth burns within him. It affects him first and most. He feels masterful. He is masterful. He becomes authoritative. It compels him. He compels others.

The two British preachers, the posthumous publication of whose sermons has been most marked, illustrate the two types. Spurgeon's authority came largely from his being a powerful representative of Bible truth as developed by Calvin. Robertson's authority came largely from his having hammered out Bible truths on the anvil of his own soul and with burning fires. Each of course had some of the other. Perhaps an American, Phillips Brooks, recognized as authoritative in all four zones, is the great man who was both a true representative and an original discoverer.

The prophets had no official authority, nor did John the Baptist, but these all exercised a surpassing personal authority. In this we cannot equal them nor many others of the outstanding Christian leaders; but most of us, perhaps all of us, without being dictatorial or declamatory in our claims, can, in these and other kindred ways, greatly enhance our authority among men.

## THROUGH PREPARATION

PREPARATION for preaching has two distinct aspects: I — Immediate. II. — General.

I. The pressure for the production of sermons at stated intervals places on most ministers a severe intellectual and spiritual strain. The creative mind does not function with chronological regularity, but the appointed hour and the expectant congregation do thus arrive. The preacher, on the stroke of the clock, must give them, not a stone but bread, not a scorpion but an egg, and these are not always easily secured.

This difficulty grows greater because of the increasing inroads upon his attention and time by other interests, in the church and out of it. Even when safely in his study the imperative telephone interrupts, while the automobile brings to his door insistent callers.

Because of these difficulties, many are tempted to follow in the steps of unwise guides. One is the " barrel " preacher. He keeps all his sermons and in his second pastorate draws upon them very freely. Preparing some new ones, he has a larger supply for his next pastorate, and so on with each successive change. He uses old sermons with increasing frequency, and receives many compliments because he selects those that were complimented before.

The second is the " scissors and paste " preacher. He keeps scrapbooks filled with homiletical material, collected by himself or some one else. Each week having selected his text and theme, he turns at once to these collections and quickly secures an abundance of choice material. He usually interests people and impresses them as one widely read. He is very popular — at first.

The third is the " hand-to-mouth " preacher. He rarely gives much thought to sermonizing before the end of the week, and then jumps at something that seems interesting or important and preaches what may be very properly called an extemporaneous sermon. He ordinarily is very demonstrative in his delivery.

These men often are popular in their youth but are not apt to grow much. Such a minister in his twenties may be fairly near his maximum, but in his thirties he is further from what he might have been then, and still more behind in the forties, fifties, and sixties.

Of course all ministers should make use of the material carefully prepared by them in the past; all should draw for sermon enrichment from every available source; and all are compelled sometimes to preach with scant preparation. Nevertheless those who make these practices habitual, who walk in these easy roads, seldom reach the summit of their pulpit power.

Much attention should be given to sermon preparation but the important question is not the num-

ber of hours spent on a sermon but whether time enough has elapsed between the first planting and the ingathering for use. Some vegetables grow rapidly and are soon ready for the table; others need several weeks; still others several months. So is it with sermons. Occasionally one can mature in a few hours. Most need several days. Others require weeks. Some must have months or are not really ready until a year or two after their first planting in the preacher's mind. How many half-ripe sermons are handed out!

Who knows how much time a subject needs, and how we can be sure that there will be something ripe and ready for each Sunday? Let every man have, for a greenhouse, a desk drawer where he may plant whatever comes to him. In making pastoral calls the need for the presentation of some subject becomes evident. On reaching his study this is written down with possible text, outline, illustrations and applications, and laid away in the drawer. So when in his Bible study a verse challenges him, or in his general reading a good theme presents itself, he thinks upon them awhile, records and files them with the others. They are now fairly planted. From time to time he cultivates them, as they recur to his mind or as he takes these records out of the drawer, thinks a bit about them and adds to his notes.

Some subjects never grow at all. Others grow but fail to mature. Still others bear fruit but it is too poor to market. Of the more promising, part mature rapidly, others slowly. The subconscious mind

often does much, returning them to us wonderfully developed. The conscious mind also becomes a marked factor. A man finds himself very unexpectedly thinking on some of these subjects. Illustrations come falling out of a clear sky. Scenes and experiences that he had not thought of for years suddenly appear and offer their services. Material flings itself at him out of all sorts of papers and books. Ordinary conversations suggest vital applications. Some day the sermon will be ready and usually it is some special occasion, some need, some opportunity, that completes the maturing process. Somewhat suggestive is nature's method with the hen that is laying an egg every day. She does not defer commencing tomorrow's egg until today's is laid, but has growing within her body eggs in every stage from the single cell to the almost completed egg. Similarly may the mind work.

By this method we are more apt to think things through. Our treatment so often is hurried and superficial. This enables the mind to brood over a subject, as did the Spirit of God over chaos, and then to exercise its creative powers. Our sermons will have more real thought in them. The material gathered, from whatever source it comes, is more likely to be pertinent, less of the nature of mere filling. As the plant draws from the soil and air what it needs, discarding all else, so will these subjects. They will surprise us with the range of the sources from which they gather and the richness of the material.

II. No man however can afford to devote all his

intellectual and spiritual effort to preparation for the Sundays immediately ahead of him. He must spend time in making himself broader and stronger. " Practice makes perfect " applies to some mechanical processes but never will bring the sermonizer to his maximum. It is sad to see many ministers so devoted to the work in hand that their growth is checked. Some are actually losing ground.

Early in my ministry I attended a ministerial club, of which most of the men were of national reputation. They were pastors of very large churches, with many parish duties, and yet they revealed an astonishing familiarity with the great books of the day. Mastering masterpieces made them masters of men.

How much time should a minister spend in preparing himself for growth and larger future service? The beginner should give the major part of his study hours to preparation for his immediate tasks, but not all, never all. As, however, he becomes more familiar with parish duties and develops more facility in sermon making, he should increase the time for general study.

This should include some non-professional subjects, history, science, economics, law, something " not in our line." These should be taken up not for theological ammunition or homiletical material, but as any thinking man would approach them. The more varied and the more unfamiliar these domains of knowledge the better.

The people may be left in utter ignorance of the fact that their minister has taken up these studies,

but they will feel in him a reserve power. His utterances will carry more weight. Momentum will be more easily generated and more steadily maintained. By this knowledge he will secure breadth, strength, poise, endurance. The athlete not only develops the muscles to be used in the contest but seeks to have every sinew, nerve, and drop of blood in his body at its best. The pulpit power of some men is a mystery until you see the standard books which they have carefully studied.

The gain comes not through the rapid reading of many books but through the mastery of a few strong works. It is not wise to limit ourselves to writings whose positions are familiar, whose views are ours. Our study may well take us into hostile territory that we may have the stimulus of adventure or battle. A minister is a fool to fling away a book half read because its contentions are contrary to his convictions. To master it by understanding it and then vanquishing it will bring to him an appreciable increment of power.

Richard Salter Storrs, a prince of preachers, surpassed all his previous efforts in his oration on " The Puritan Spirit " delivered in his sixty-eighth year. At three score and ten he was still preparing himself and at seventy-eight gave an address on " The Permanent Motive in Missionary Work " which many considered his masterpiece. In resigning his pastorate soon after that, he told me that his main regret was that in his mind stood in line many great themes, eagerly waiting their turn for presentation,

to which, by his resignation, he had closed the door so that they could not come forth.

Preparation like his, wise and wide, constant and thorough, is absolutely necessary for the attainment of maximum pulpit power.

## THROUGH WORKMANSHIP

WHETHER the value of the material or the quality of the workmanship constitutes the major factor in the worth of any production depends on what it is. In sermons the truth content stands first but the workmanship is no negligible element. I heard two preachers on consecutive Sundays, the one welcomed eagerly by a large and attentive congregation and the other tolerated by a small and indifferent group. There was not much to choose between the two sermons in their substance; but in workmanship they were as different as a watch spring and a bit of cast iron, and that explained all. When the truth presented is familiar, as it usually is, the workmanship becomes increasingly important. How can we expect any man to welcome eagerly a commonplace presentation of a truth that he has known from childhood and perhaps himself has given again and again to others?

Upon his workmanship the minister must depend largely in creating an interest in his message and in securing for it lodgment in the minds of his hearers. We may regret this. We may rebel against it. We may insist that the truth will do its work because of its own virtue and vitality. It will, but an essential prerequisite is its acceptance, and how improbable

is this if workmanship be crude or careless or altogether lacking.

Skillful homiletic workmanship finds itself following three ideals. In selecting the material to be used in any sermon from the available supply,

### The Ideal of Unity

is the guide. A collection of Biblical comments, earnest thoughts, illustrations and appeals, thrown together, no more constitute a sermon than a pile of lumber, a load of bricks, a barrel of plaster, kegs of nails, and pails of paint, dumped on a vacant lot, are a house. Sermonizing is selecting material and building it into a single structure, a unit, nothing extraneous allowed, nothing essential omitted.

Too often a pulpit discourse consists of parts of two or three different sermons patched together. More sermons are injured by the introduction of irrelevant material than by any other single cause. We can not bear to discard that interesting incident, that choice poem, that telling epigram, that important lesson, though we know that it does not belong in that sermon. The more interesting the intrusion, the more diverting and detrimental it is. We need homiletical heroism to repel the invader. The preacher needs the grim determination to reject everything not integral to the theme. It being hard to make a permanent impression, we need to concentrate on a single clean-cut stroke. No miscellany avails much. As well try to drive in and clinch a

steel rivet with a finger tattoo — which is what some sermons really are.

Unity requires also the inclusion of everything requisite to make it complete. Who ever won a golf game with five-sixths of a ball? Fractions foreshadow failure, yet how often we try to win with a sermon which lacks some important part.

Unity should be sought not only in the introduction, the body structure, and the conclusion but in the selection of materials for the details. In a nature sermon draw illustrations from farm life and horticulture; let the discourse on Christian warfare be replete with the vocabulary and figures of the battlefield; in the consideration of communion with God, draw freely from the lives of the noblest mystics. Are the consequences of sin being portrayed? Let legal maxims and courtroom phrases color the language. Is Christ the healer being presented? The words and wisdom of the family physician should supply many expressions. Moreover, in each of these cases avoid so far as is possible illustrations and phrases from other domains so that everything, even the literary ornaments, may add to the unity of the whole. Thus one spirit will breathe through it all.

### The Ideal of Symmetry

is the guide in arranging the material selected. How nature appeals to us in the symmetry of the elm and pine! The traveler gazes listlessly from the car window until his eye falls on an orchard whose trees

are marshalled in stately ranks and whose outreaching and balanced branches invite sunshine and showers to color and flavor the fast growing fruit. How the significance and spiritual impressiveness of the Lincoln Memorial at Washington are enhanced by its perfect proportions! Symmetry is always an added asset, not artificial but natural, for nature follows law and order, and truth is inherently symmetrical.

Perhaps this is one reason why Jesus above all preachers was symmetrical in his presentations. How he loved to balance truths! The virgins, five wise and five foolish; the sheep and the goats; the tares and the wheat; the prodigal son and the elder brother; love to God and love to man; prayer, secret and ostentatious; the talents, five, two, one — these and many other instances appear.

Why do we not follow him more instead of presenting slovenly structures, twisted or jumbled together in a haphazard fashion? If symmetry in structure calls for two points, they should be two that fairly face each other; if three, not any three but three that center their support like a tripod; if four, not any quadrilateral but something four-square.

The symmetry of sermons suffers most in the unequal developments of the parts. We start in sometimes with an elaborate introduction, a fully treated first point, and then find that our time, whether for preparation or delivery, has nearly gone and so we squeeze the second point and make a pass-

ing reference to the third. What monstrosities we often produce, the feet of a giant with the head of a pigmy, an armless body, or even a headless horseman, forgetting that cripples rarely conquer. Not that all parts should have equal elaboration and emphasis, any more than that all five fingers should be of the same length and shape. Symmetry is simply giving to each its due and no more.

Symmetry is more than artistry. Most marked is the strength that inheres in it. A sermon with a fine structure may be dull, but nobody ever calls it weak. Every part has its own intrinsic worth and adds to the strength of every other part and in like manner receives. The strength and beauty credited to the sanctuary may be predicated also of a symmetrical sermon.

## The Ideal of Clarity

In the fashioning and finishing of the material thus selected and arranged, the ideal of clarity should guide. Although clarity is put last it is not least. If the sermon fails in this respect all is lost. If the people cannot understand, nothing is gained by preaching. Paul said that he would rather speak five words which the people could understand than ten thousand in an unknown tongue. So would we, but like all specialists we are in danger of not realizing how incomprehensible we often are. We discover it sometimes when a simple pulpit notice, ordinary requests and directions are entirely misun-

derstood by many, perhaps by most. Even more true is this in sermonizing. If the listener stops a moment to think what the preacher meant by that last sentence, he loses the thread of the thought and may not be able to pick it up again. If he misunderstands one word or does not understand it at all, it may be much more than the loss of one word. It may throw him off the track altogether. The lack of unity in our sermons we can see, the lack of symmetry we may realize, but the lack of clarity unfortunately is rarely evident to us.

Here more than anywhere else do we fail. Here more than anywhere else should we use constant care. The vocabulary is the basic factor. We search to find the word that expresses exactly the thought we have in mind. That is the wrong approach, for we are not preaching to walking encyclopedias. Our effort should be to discover the word which will most nearly convey to the hearer the thought that is in the mind of the preacher, and it may be a very different word from the most exact. The preacher may use the word "flesh" in the theological sense, or the word "social" in the sociological sense, and have many in his congregation accept them with a meaning that is farthest from his thought. A study of the dictionary is important, a study of the vocabulary of the congregation is more important. Especially is this true in preaching Children's Sermons. I heard one with twenty words no child would know.

It is astonishing how much a little change will clear up an obscurity. Often transferring an ad-

verb to another part of the sentence, reversing the order of two consecutive sentences, relocating an illustration or quotation, putting an entire paragraph in a new place, will clarify what was confusing. Even more startling in letting the light shine through is the removal of some adjective, phrase, thought, appeal. To remove what stands in the light is sometimes the final act needed to make the sermon as clear as daylight.

Skillful workmanship adds value to everything and sermonizing is no exception. Listen to a sermon that lacks unity, symmetry, clarity, the three homiletical graces, and know that however good it is and however much good it may do, you are listening to a preacher who is far below his maximum pulpit power.

## THROUGH INTENSITY

"THAT was a good sermon, but . . ." In content and structure it ranked high but the congregation by their listlessness gave this verdict. The saint would say, "No spiritual fervor;" the man on the street, "It lacked punch;" the modern maiden, "He did not get me;" the war veteran, "He stayed in the trenches instead of going over the top." The preacher had worked hard in preparing that sermon, but it fell like a nail on a plank, fastening nothing, not even entering or denting the wood. The hammer was missing! The driving power was not there. It lacked intensity. How often this happens! Why is it?

### PHYSICAL INTENSITY

Physical condition sometimes is the main factor in the failure. A minister engaged an expert to criticise his preaching. This was the verdict: "What you need is horseback riding. Your sermons are good and your delivery is not defective, but there is no vitality back of them. The pose of your body, your gestures, your voice suggest weariness. You are getting sympathy rather than submission from your hearers." Horseback riding is no cure-all, but the truth here is undeniable. Preaching needs physical vigor.

I once heard Spurgeon in his own tabernacle when

he failed even to hold the people's attention. Later I talked with him in his study. As I entered he apologized for not rising because he was weak and sick. He thrilled me in that conversation, for he had physical vitality enough to move one man in his study but not enough to grip a great audience. The preacher who seems tired in the pulpit rarely is triumphant. Most masters of assemblies have had physical strength or nervous energy. Gladstone's woodchopping suggested many jokes but was back of his matchless oratorical power. Some may point to Lyman Abbott as an exception, but in his autobiography he tells of the care he took of his physical life and that he never experienced physical exhaustion. When eighty, he said in a letter to me that he had been able to work so long and so hard because he had recognized that "neglect of the body is a sin against God."

The minister should aim to regulate his life so as to be "physically fit" on Sunday morning. How foolish we often are! We take Monday off. Tuesday finds us refreshed and eager for our tasks. As we work along, each day reduces our physical reserve. Cheer up, another Monday is coming; but Sunday finds us at the lowest point of the week. The athlete practises little, rather relaxes, the day before the contest. Doctor R. S. Storrs made it a rule never to attend a public gathering on Saturday evening. A strenuous Saturday begets a listless Sunday. A slight cold may bring to naught the most careful sermonic preparation. How careful a minis-

ter should be in eating lest Sunday morning find him with a headache from indigestion.

The preservation of good health, the building up of physical vitality, the husbanding of energy for the Sunday services are both a wise investment and a Christian duty. These endeavors are not that the minister may feel like shouting or pounding the pulpit or stamping around the platform, but that his body may be a facile and responsive instrument for the spirit within. Every feeling of the heart, every thought of the mind, every impulse from above, has to pass through the body before it can reach the hearts and minds of the hearers; too often little passes through because the medium is in such poor condition. A man's soul may be a great dynamo, but he will not be dynamic if the transmission wires are defective. The physical can not create the spiritual but it can conceal it. Physical lassitude is often interpreted as spiritual indifference. Especially do intensity, enthusiasm, spiritual passion, need a fine and responsive instrument for their expression.

Spirituality with frailty often has a rare beauty but it can not project itself with compelling power any great distance over many minds. Thank God that some men with serious physical handicaps have wrought mightily for his kingdom; but these are the exceptions, and most of us are not likely to approximate our maximum pulpit power Sunday after Sunday unless we are in the best possible physical condition.

## Mental Intensity

Physical vitality and vim, however, are merely instruments. Alone they are as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Back of them and finding expression through them must be mental intensity if the sermon is to have driving power and be able to clinch the truth. To secure this, two elements are needed. The first is a deep and genuine interest in the subject presented. This generally exists. The particular phase of truth treated was not thrust upon the preacher, making his presentation perfunctory, but was chosen because it interested him.

More frequently absent is the second element — a clearly defined purpose. He has of course the common motives of a desire to satisfy his constituency and to win success; and also the special aim of his calling to unfold the truth, to preach the gospel, to extend the kingdom of God. These, however, are too general to keep his soul aglow week after week. Each sermon should have its own special purpose, as distinctly as it has its own text, and the more definite and concrete the result sought the better.

Dr. Lyman Abbott in his autobiography wrote: "The first requisite of a good sermon therefore is a clearly defined objective. When this simple but fundamental truth dawned upon me, I was humiliated to find how many sermons I was preaching without a well defined object." Many of us would have to make the same confession and in making it would

recognize why so many of our really good sermons fell flat.

It is not necessary that the purpose should be announced, not even that it should be apparent to the people, but it ought to be as clearly before the preacher's mind as the congregation is before his eyes.

### Spiritual Intensity

Thus far the minister, the lecturer, the political speaker, the salesman, have been standing on the same ground; but the herald of the gospel must take one more step to secure achieving intensity. He must have conscious contact with the unseen and eternal. The athlete, the salesman, the general find this an asset but not an essential as does the minister. His intensity must be spiritual, as well as physical and mental, if he is to be triumphantly dynamic. Abraham had that contact, and so did Moses and David, Elijah and Elisha, and all the prophets, John the Baptist and the apostles. From Jesus, not only in prayer, but in miracle and teaching and various experiences, came the flashes that revealed the presence of the divine current and contact.

Every sermon needs to be born from above, but how shall these things be? Like the mysterious wind is every sermon that is born of the Spirit. John the Baptist said of Jesus, "He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire," and we must have the Spirit if we would have the real fire.

Here rules and regulations fail and come peril-

ously near pious cant. Some man may toss you a formula to insure the divine dynamic. Be not deceived. God's ways are not our ways. Yet we need it. How desperately we need it if we are to drive the truth home to the consciences of men!

It may come through long hours of meditation, or fervent passionate prayer, through self-sacrificial service or heroic endurance, on the mount of transfiguration or in the garden of Gethsemane, but of one thing the Master seems to make us certain. This power is to be secured by asking, seeking, knocking. "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." The man who seldom thinks about it, seldom longs for it, seldom reaches out for it, rarely finds it. The indifferent are not apt to stumble accidentally on God.

This contact must move into coöperation. Mere contemplation, even spiritual ecstacy, is inadequate. This consciousness of the divine presence must fill us with a sense of the divine partnership if we would be stirred to stir the souls of men. The fervor comes when we feel God urging us on to win for Him. Even more does this contact with God arouse us when we receive from him a commission. Who can be indifferent when he feels that he has a message of the utmost importance from God himself?

How can a feeble body, a purposeless sermon, an earthly message in the pulpit on Sunday be expected to have driving power? If, however, there be phy-

sical freedom, passionate purpose, and the consciousness of a divine commission, surely some will say: "Was not our heart burning within us while he spake to us?"

## THROUGH ACCURACY OF AIM

THE purpose in any effort may be very definite and yet the aim poor as many a novice hunter for partridges has proved. Of course there is always a chance that a gun fired into a clump of bushes, where a rustling is heard, may hit a bird, but the chances are small. Not rare is the Sunday dinner comment: "What do you suppose the parson was driving at this morning?" Perhaps he did not know himself. Firing with aim and firing without aim are very different. I remember once how interesting at a Wild West Show was the sight of the cowboys riding into the arena and firing off their guns; but how much greater the thrill as Buffalo Bill entered on his prancing pony and ball after ball, tossed into the air, flew into pieces as the bullets sped from his well aimed rifle. They were firing. He was aiming. Our congregations see too much mere firing.

### THE INTELLECT

The sermon may be aimed at the intellect, when the object is to impart information or secure assent, a purely educational effort.

In aiming at the intellect, clearness is necessary. Firing in a fog is futile. Unless the mind sees, it

cannot grasp and all is in vain. Lines must be drawn distinctly. The mind should be helped to remember as well as to see. Points may well be numbered. The best conclusion is a summary. Careful attention should be given to chronological sequence, to logical development, to consistency. Exactness is an asset. The balancing of contrasts helps. Hyperbole may do in some places, but never here.

Most of all must there be progress. The mind loves to move forward, unlike the emotions which prefer to circle and the will which wishes to stay fixed. Let the mind be taken step by step into new ground. It resents repetition and is impatient at the exploitation of the familiar.

The sermon should be aimed especially at the ignorance in the mind. The great difficulty in preaching is that much of the material is already familiar to the congregation. Having mastered his subject the minister's next question is "How much ignorance about it is there?" If he underestimates their ignorance and assumes a knowledge his hearers do not possess, he goes over their heads and misses the mark altogether. The most learned professor I ever had taught his pupils little. His most devoted students admitted that they had more admiration for him than information from him. He was a poor shot. If, on the other hand, the preacher exaggerates the ignorance of his hearers and tells them things that they know well, they resent it or relax into inattention. If their ignorance is correctly located and the aim is true, the intellect will respond with: "I

never knew that before," or " I never thought of it in that way," or " That is well worth remembering."

## The Emotions

Aiming at the emotions is a very different proposition. There must be first a definite decision by the preacher as to what emotion he expects to arouse: — compassion, indignation, hope, confidence, sadness, courage, love, whatever it may be. In one of my courses in homiletics each student is required to write an emotional appeal. It is surprising to find sometimes, after the student has read his appeal, that he cannot tell what emotion he was seeking to arouse. He was just trying to stir up the feelings. That is a mistake. Not emotions but an emotion, and that emotion which will best accomplish the purpose that he had, should be the target.

This requires much care for the emotions stand very close to each other and it is quite possible to aim at one and hit another. A representative of the Near East Relief, in presenting his cause in my church, told many harrowing tales of cruelty and stirred up the feelings of the people tremendously, but he aroused the wrong feeling, one of indignation at the Turks. Nobody could talk afterward of anything else. The collection was small. Two years later another of their speakers also told many stories that played on the feelings but he evoked the right emotion, compassion for the children. The collection was large. I recall another case where a min-

ister endeavored to awaken the emotion of fear toward God, but instead stirred up a feeling of disgust with the preacher.

The emotions, however, tire more quickly than does the mind. If they are exhausted, all is lost. It is necessary sometimes to introduce extraneous matter to relieve the tension as Shakespeare introduces the fools in his tragedies. The ocean billow breaking on the shore withdraws in seeming defeat, only to make a farther onrush; so the advance on the emotions must be broken with an occasional flash of humor, some diverting incident, some counter emotion, before the next forward surge.

There are real dangers, however, in appealing to the emotions. If no impression is made the result is not indifference but amusement at the speaker's efforts, or disgust.

If the impression is altogether superficial or notably extreme an intense reaction ensues that leaves a damaged soul.

If the uplift is real and earnest but we fail to lead it into fruition of some sort, we put ourselves in the same class as the theater where emotions are born as nowhere else but usually are " still-born " or die in infancy.

Few men will aim an entire sermon at the emotions. More often it is one point, or one paragraph; but he who never aims at the emotions errs. He not only loses much power but he wrongs human nature and human needs. Feelings are deeply touched by the home life, by many forms of entertainment, by

all kinds of literature, by daily experiences in every realm of life and the pulpit fails if it does not utilize this great element of human nature for the Kingdom of God.

## The Will

Aiming at the will is as different from the others as bombing for submarines is unlike trying to bring down airplanes. The marked difference is this. Most people like to have their emotions aroused. That is why some attend the theater. Others are willing to be informed, therefore they read much; but few are seeking for somebody to conquer their wills. Sometimes an assent of the will is secured easily because of existing interest, of natural inclination, of controlling habits. In such cases the approach should be direct with the presentation of arguments and an earnest appeal.

Often, however, the moment that the will recognizes the attempt to conquer it, a resisting attitude is assumed. All approaches are closed and guarded; argument is arrayed against argument, protest against appeal, defiance against insistence, anger against warnings. Facts given are denied or discounted. Excuses spring up from every side. It becomes warfare, defensive and offensive.

Under such circumstances strategy is necessary. The intellect and emotions should first be won over. The aim at the will should be reserved until the close. The final goal should be concealed or the minds of the hearers diverted from it. Jesus' par-

ables were largely of this type. Secure a committal to a kindred proposition with which the hearer is in sympathy. Thus did the prophet Nathan with King David. Employ freely the barrage. When all the preparatory work has been done and the way cleared, the appeal to the will should be direct and determined.

There are, of course, two different ways of attacking the will. One is to secure an immediate decision. It is a charge "over the top" with a dash. The other is to surround it so that eventual surrender seems inevitable, for which the preacher can well afford to wait. The type used must depend somewhat on the nature of the purpose, the spirit of the man and the circumstances.

Aiming at the intellect is interesting, aiming at the emotions is fascinating, but aiming at the will is the most challenging of all.

## THROUGH DELIVERY

Delivery concerns the body primarily, the physical medium through which are disclosed the thoughts and feelings of the speaker. It may, like glass, reveal exactly, or it may dim or distort, or it may magnify what is within.

Some men, whose words, appearing in editorials, articles, books, are powerfully persuasive, become impotent before an audience because of a hampering delivery. I knew a brilliant conversationalist who evidently felt like a fool and certainly acted like one when he faced an assembly. His delivery collapsed and brought down with it in the ruins his choice sayings. On the other hand not infrequently men of mediocre mentality grip audiences because of a masterful and moving delivery which can make some incidental fact seem of paramount importance and platitudes sound oracular.

The first element is the posture of the body. The drooping figure with both hands on some support, or the body leaning on the pulpit or worse still lolling over it, tends to destroy confidence and weaken the force of any utterance. Similarly does the expression of the face count for or against the message. The perpetual frown, or the spasmodic and periodic smile, the furtive glances of the eyes, or the far

away space-gaze usually divert the attention and often annoy or antagonize. On the other hand the erect posture, the frankly direct look, the flitting of a smile at some pleasantry or cheerful thought, the softening of the lines of the face with some expression of sympathy, the look of sternness in denouncing evil accelerate the flight of the message to the hearts of the hearers.

## Gesticulation

Even more important are the gestures. It is safe to say that more than half the gestures made in the pulpit hinder more than they help. There are the jerky nervous gestures, which mean nothing to the hearer save that the speaker does not have himself under good control, and the monopolistic gesture that is the only one used and is repeated over and over, perhaps a hundred times in one sermon. It may be the pump-handle or the finger pointing type, the gesture with the fingers spread far apart, the hands in the pockets, the fingering of the lapel of the coat, the playing with the watch chain or the perpetual adjusting of the glasses. The motion of the hands always attracts attention and in all these cases it diverts from the thought instead of aiding it.

There are two kinds of gestures, the emphatic and the interpretative. The former should not be used frequently, only to impress an important thought or to achieve a climax. Their form should be determined by the degree of emphasis desired. The finger

and hand add a little. A movement from the elbow while the upper arm remains at the side increases the effect, but the impression is not strong until the whole arm swings out with great freedom and force. Emphatic gestures are used by most ministers with too much frequency, with too little variety and almost always are too small, employing mainly one finger, the hand or the lower part of one arm.

There is much more call for the interpretative gesture. Here the whole body can be brought into play to indicate to the eye what the mind is endeavoring to express and impress. How much can be conveyed in this way appears in "the movies." Here not a word is spoken and only a few sentences appear on the screen, almost everything being revealed by the expressions on the face, and the poses and actions of the body. The exaggerated action common here should not be imitated, but in preaching gestures corresponding to the thought will make it clearer and more impressive.

The same general principle applies to every motion of the body. The time to change one's position on the pulpit platform is when the thought changes. As one point is completed and another commenced stepping back or to either side has significance and value. When a personal appeal to the congregation is made a forward step, the body bending toward them, adds effectiveness.

No man should practise the gestures to be used in any particular sermon. He should never think of them while preaching. Let him rather in his

room, day after day, standing as though in a pulpit, utter thought after thought, describe scenes and use illustrations, all the time making his arms and whole body present the same, until by much practice his muscles become flexible, his motions easy and graceful, and his every action a perfect expression of his thought. As such attempts at interpretation become natural to him he will instinctively gesticulate correctly and with great effectiveness in the pulpit.

## The Voice

Even more important is the use he makes of the muscles of his mouth and throat — lips, tongue, and vocal cords: — his voice. How stiff, how flabby, under what poor control these muscles often are. One has but to listen to different preachers on successive Sundays to realize how much pulpit power is affected by the voice. Some men's voices diminish their power while others double and quadruple it.

How few men try to train these muscles! If the average minister spent on his voice a small fraction of the time he spends on his sermons he would add much to the power of those sermons. If he cannot secure an expert to guide his practice or take a professional's correspondence course let him try exercises in his room, the minister's "daily dozen."

A few will suffice.

(1) For Breath Control, practise deep breathing. Then fill the lungs and talk quietly, or sound the "oo" continuously for thirty or more seconds

without taking another breath. Utter explosively "O" many times with a quick, strong motion of the diaphragm.

(2) For Enunciation, roll the R until you can trill thirty seconds very softly with one breath. Repeat the alphabet again and again before a mirror with exaggerated action of the lips until all their muscles become strong and supple. Exercise them further in a very large room by learning how to whisper so that a person at the farthest limit can catch every word distinctly. Then see with how soft and low a tone you can make your listener hear every word.

(3) For Resonance, say "oo," making the air space in your mouth larger and larger as your jaws are spread farther and farther apart, while the aperture made by your lips remains small. Then increase the breath pressure until the "oo" grows louder and louder and makes the whole room ring with the sound; and finally make the "oo" go up and down the scale. Later utter the "oo" and pass to the "o" sound without any more change of the lips and mouth than is necessary, and then to the "au" and then to the open "a," always keeping the jaws far apart and the opening of the lips as small as possible. In the same way begin with "e," when the lips have to be open more, and pass to the other vowels, trying to keep the sound as though it came from behind the upper front teeth. In all this forget your throat, whose muscles should be relaxed.

(4) For the Vocal Cords, practise these same ex-

ercises, going up and down the scale, especially trying to go as low as possible. In these do not use the singing but the speaking voice. Sound a monosyllabic word, about in the middle of your register, repeating it three times, first on a dead level, second with a rising inflection and third with a downward slide.

(5) For Expression, read Shakespeare's dialogues out loud, endeavoring to have the voice express the character of the speaker, the thought of his mind, and the emotion moving him.

## Pulpit Oratory

This generation has turned from the old fashioned oratory of the stately type but in so doing it has swung too far to the other extreme, and the pulpit today is suffering from it. We have the scholarly lecture type of preaching, the dramatic sensational type, the business matter-of-fact type. We need more of the oratorical.

The first mark of the orator is that he begins in a natural conversational way, quiet in voice, direct in address; and thus speaks for some time. As his subject develops and his audience becomes interested he gives himself greater freedom in physical action and in the play of the voice. Then at the significant, critical passages in the sermon, he summons and employs every bit of ability in self-expression that he possesses.

The second mark is that his delivery corresponds with the subject matter of the sermon. Is it descrip-

tion? Interpretative gestures are employed. Is it an earnest demand? Emphatic gestures predominate. Is it an emotional appeal? The posture of the body, the expression on the face, the tone of the voice reveal feeling. Is it an accidental illustration, tense muscles relax and the manner becomes quiet.

How different is the non-oratorical preacher! If intense, he is apt to be so from beginning to end, always emphatic even in making an incidental statement. If of the quiet type, he is calm all the way through, even in giving the most vital truth of his sermon or in his closing appeal. One man gestures all the time and another never moves hand or foot.

The oratorical preacher secures two things. One is a variety that helps in holding the attention. Next to distinctness in enunciation variety is the most important element in the delivery. Sameness for thirty minutes is a common pulpit blight, which oratory avoids.

The second advantage within reach of the oratorical style is the climax. Of course where the sermon is poorly constructed the delivery cannot be supremely effective; but when each phase of the treatment is brought to a strong close, the oratorical delivery, perceiving it and feeling it, can carry to great heights the congregation and in the final conclusion can make an impression that will be inspiring and abiding.

Two heart searching questions come to every minister:—
How far below *my* maximum pulpit power am I?
Am I coming nearer to it year by year?

# PART THREE

## TECHNIQUE IN BUILDING SERMONS

*Let me do something perfect, before death:*
*Some least of things, so it be whole, and free*
*From any faltering touch; that none may see*
*One faintest flaw; that not one lightest breath*
*May dim the grace my sure hand fashioneth.*
*I know there is not any strength in me*
*To work this deed; oh, may Thy power be*
*Fulfilled in weakness; as Thy Scripture saith!*

*My soul is sick of half accomplishments,*
*Of deeds that are no deeds, of victories*
*Uncrowned by triumph; stranger to content*
*Until Thou work in me some excellence,*
*That my heart have rest ere I go hence;*
*Blind voyager across the bitter seas.*

EDMUND BARSS.

## LAYING THE FOUNDATION

EVERY structure, material or spiritual, should have a foundation. Air castles are as evanescent as they are iridescent. Even a substantial building is unsafe or unsatisfactory if it rests on shifting sands.

A sermon should rest squarely on a text or a theme or on a combination of the two. The selection of the first, the fashioning of the second and their adjustment to each other are far greater factors in determining the abiding value of a sermon than the casual observer realizes.

### THE TEXT

The custom of beginning a sermon with a passage of Scripture has marked advantages. At times it may seem conventional and even perfunctory but most people expect a text and it does definitely relate the sermon to the supernaturally inspired revelation which is the foundation of our faith. Especially great is its value when it has a large truth content and when it is made really a foundation and not a front porch.

There are thousands of verses in the Bible but only a small portion of them would make good sermon texts. A passage may be of interest to the

reader, or of value to the scholar, or an aid to the devotions and yet have little homiletical value in this way. Selecting texts is a fine art, often neglected. As a minister can use only a small percentage of the verses of the Bible for this purpose, it behooves him to select the best.

There is special danger of bungling work here because of the increasing tendency to preach topical sermons. The preacher is driven more and more to this by the incessant demand for special Sundays, patriotic, philanthropic, ecclesiastical and local, each presenting a theme for the day. The selection of the text is a later, perhaps the last, consideration. It often is difficult to find one that fits and frequently little effort is made. It comes first in the sermon but sounds sometimes like an afterthought. Supplying foundations after most of the work is done, whether in houses or sermons, is doubly difficult and rarely satisfactory.

For a topical sermon the advantage lies with the short text. A volume of Spurgeon's sermons shows that half the texts have less than twelve words, including such as " And that rock was Christ," " Thou God seest me," " There are the two covenants," " Is it not wheat harvest today?", " And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the Man." Phillips Brooks did likewise, a volume of his sermons containing numerous short texts such as "Son, why has thou thus dealt with us?" " The Church of the Living God," " And He hath made everything beautiful in his time." Such texts are particularly effective if they contain

dramatic action as " And the door was shut " or have the challenge of a question as " Shall I crucify your king? "

Often striking contrasts can be secured and unusual effects produced by the use of two texts, as " Take heed that ye do not your righteousness to be seen of men " with " Let your light so shine before men;" " The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge " with " Perfect love casteth out fear." Dr. A. J. Lyman preached on " I go bound " with " I press forward."

Comparatively few verses are good for textual sermons. Here the text must contain various important phases of its truth, which will guide the sermon in its successive steps and yet with unity enough to bind all together into one climactic conclusion. The historical books do not abound in such texts. Proverbs supplies some short ones. The Psalms contain more but the best appear in the prophecies and epistles. A favorite is Micah 6:8 " He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee but to do justly, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with thy God? " It would be difficult to find in all the Bible a hundred texts that lend themselves to a textual sermon as well as this one but a search for them would be interesting and rewarding. A textual sermon, resting every major point directly on a phrase of the text, has a strength and stability that many topical sermons lack.

Care is needed also in the selection of passages to be used as foundations for expository sermons. The

best are found in the historical books, especially in the Gospels, though the Psalms offer much material for this type of sermon. The passage must have an inherent unity, such as a parable, a miracle, an incident, a character. Otherwise it will become a series of sermonettes on successive verses or a running comment that reaches no goal. The expository sermon is like a pyramid, resting on a very broad foundation but gradually converging and reaching its climax in a point that reveals its complete unity.

Whatever the type of sermon produced, it is to its advantage to have a Biblical foundation. Of course this is no guarantee. A textless sermon may be permeated with Scripture teachings and a sermon with a text may be utterly barren of spiritual truths; the former may be interesting and the latter stupid; nevertheless time spent in finding a fine foundation hewn out of the quarries of the Bible is time well spent.

## The Theme

The sermon theme also offers material for a foundation and many sermons, especially topical sermons, are built up entirely on the theme. The exact phrasing of the theme is very important as well as often very difficult. A single word is usually inadequate because it does not sufficiently indicate the scope of the discourse. Instead of taking "Faith" as a theme, Parkhurst selected "Constructive Faith" and Hooker "The Activity of Faith." On the other hand a sentence, especially a long one, is undesirable.

Instead of choosing for a Labor Day theme "The many advantages that have come to the laboring classes during the centuries from slavery to the present time," use "Labor on Life's Ladder;" and instead of "Many things that seem impossible can be accomplished if earnest effort is made," use "The Pursuit of the Impossible." The most effective themes consist of a trenchant phrase or balanced clauses or a bit of pertinent alliteration; such as Moore's "The Conscript Crossbearer," Willett's "The Value of Discontent," Taylor's "Christ before Pilate—Pilate before Christ."

A theme that embodies in a concise form the main truth of the sermon is a great help to the average congregation. The hearer perceives what the sermon is about, can report it to others and has a seed thought in his memory that may spring up and bear fruit of itself. Such are Hitchcock's "Eternal Atonement," Parkhurst's "Divine Irrigation" and Hillis' "God, the Unwearied Guide."

A theme also may be so framed as to challenge thought as do Chalmers' "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection," Parkhurst's "A Growing Soul in a Widening World," and Ryder's "The Penalty of Success." Sometimes announced in advance from the pulpit or through the press they arouse curiosity and draw people to a service. There is danger of carrying this too far and of demeaning and discrediting the pulpit by employing trifling and ridiculous expression of those that allure with false promises. There is, however, a legitimate use of the striking, as

appears in Watkinson's "The Transfigured Sackcloth," Nicoll's "Gethsemane, The Rose Garden of God" and Bunyan's "The Heavenly Footman." Sometimes a series may be made attractive by its balances as "The Anger of the Meekest Man, Moses," "The Weakness of the Strongest Man, Samson," "The Folly of the Wisest Man, Solomon," "The Hopefulness of the Saddest Man, Jeremiah."

Not the least of the advantages in having a clear cut theme is its influence on the preacher himself. It becomes a restraining influence, especially when the wanderlust gets possession of his soul. It is so easy to spread out. This does not mean necessarily that the effect is narrowing. More often it broadens. Indeed if the theme is well made it makes possible a loftier and weightier superstructure. A themeless sermon is in danger of becoming ramshackle. "Watch your theme" might well be the motto over the minister's desk.

It is not enough, however, to have a good text and a good theme, upon which to build a sermon. Their relation to each other must be right. They should not have the same phraseology. Little is gained, with "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth" as the text, by choosing as a theme "The earth, the inheritance of the meek." "A Surprising Legacy" would be better. The theme, while thus different, should embody the thought of the text which the sermon is to develop. The two should supplement each other and together make one foundation as do the concrete and reenforcing iron rods

under our great modern office buildings. What an advantage Bushnell had when he linked the text "Then went in also that other disciple" with the theme "Unconscious Influence" and Canon Liddon in combining "Nathaniel said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see," with the theme "Prejudice and Experience," and Dr. Conrad in selecting "Celestial Registry" as the theme for "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rejoice rather because your names are written in heaven."

A great text and a great theme do not make a great sermon but they make a great sermon possible. The technical may seem to some artificial, but here is one of the places where it is better to be artificial than superficial. Architecture is a great art and no architect can afford to be careless about his foundation.

## THE SERMON'S STRUCTURAL STEEL

THE snow hut may suffice for the Eskimo and the log cabin for the pioneer, but modern life requires more of a framework for its buildings and increasingly uses structural steel.

For primitive peoples, the illiterate and the immature child mind, truth may be imparted with symbols, anecdotes and folk-lore recitals, but where the rising tide of modern civilization is reaching, the message must be sustained by thought structure. How different from ours the situation facing the preacher of two or three centuries ago! His average hearer had been in contact with few if any trained minds besides his own. Compared with village gossip every pulpit presentation seemed masterful. Our congregations however come to us after reading in dailies, weeklies, monthlies, the utterances of statesmen, scientists, philosophers, financiers, organizers of labor, captains of industry. Through the radio they have been listening to great orators and preachers of national and international reputations. What a task we have to reach the standard that can survive the comparisons which they are apt to make as they listen to our sermons!

We must be interesting if we are to hold their attention; but no string of stories or pious platitudes

or emotional appeals will hold their allegiance or even respect or make our messages vital and inspiring to them. A sermon today must have some structural steel in it, thought carefully wrought out, well articulated, so that it could stand alone without needing stories and pleasantries to keep it from collapsing. When the hearer can not see at what the preacher is driving, cannot grasp his thought, he calls him either " stupid " or " too deep for me," and in either case he is disgusted; but when he sees important truths in distinct outline, he has respect for the mentality both of the speaker and hearer, feels rewarded for his attention, and is inclined to respond to the appeal.

Occasionally a minister remarkably endowed can hold an important position and wield a wide influence without much thought-structure in his sermons; but the average man can not afford to dispense with it. If he does, his influence will be limited, his pastorates brief, and little by little he will be relegated to communities that have been sidetracked as the world moves forward. There are marked advantages, when sermons are built, in having a definite and distinct thought structure.

### Stability

In earthquakes, storms, fires, as well as in the ordinary wear and tear of time, buildings having steel structure endure better and last longer than others. One trouble with sermons is their lack of lasting

qualities. After the benediction some may say "A good sermon!" but seldom discuss or think of it again. It is true that the sermon is not altogether lost if soon forgotten. We all take to ourselves the comfort the old Scotch woman gave her minister when she compared his sermons to the water she sprinkled on the cloth in the sunshine which quickly evaporated but left the cloth white. Still we are not satisfied with that. We wish our sermons to be remembered and to be a continuing factor in the hearts of the people. Impressions, emotions fade easily and if retained are cherished memories rather than dynamic realities. Stories and illustrations indeed are recalled but too often with the apology, "I do not remember the point illustrated." A thought structure, however, a natural, logical, terse outline, clearly seen, will stand often for an indefinite period with a continuing value. The simpler it is the better. If the prophecy concerning the Messiah in the forty-second chapter of Isaiah is built with the plan — 1. The Ideal Servant; 2. The Ideal Saviour, the thought will have an abiding quality and may illumine many New Testament passages. A sermon on the first chapter of Joshua may be a great help to those in the congregation who happen at that particular time to be facing a difficult task; but it will be retained in the memory of the untroubled hearer to bless him when later he faces his crisis, if he has been given a structure like, "Command, Counsel, Courage, Comradeship, Jehovah's Gifts to his ser-

vants." If the hearer is given a good plan he may fill it in some day himself.

## Capacity

With a given foundation a steel structure makes it possible for a building to have a much larger capacity than would otherwise be possible. Walls and partitions are thinner, waste room is eliminated, and story after story may be added. Bungalows are all right in their place, but we have too many "bungalow sermons," spread out but not built up. A sermon on patience may be charming and helpful, but what great truths find a place in it, as you build this structure — 1. Have patience with others; 2. Have patience with yourself; 3. Have patience with God. We need to have a large truth-content in our sermons, not with the idea that each member of the congregation will receive it all, but with the hope that every one present will find something for which he has been hungering. The trouble is that the ordinary congregation contains such a variety, the sad and the hopeful, the earnest and the indifferent, the Christian and the unbeliever, the young and the old, and their needs are different. If the sermon has only one thought, a few will take it but most will go away empty-handed. The sermon without a structure is usually a one thought sermon; but if while retaining its unity it is well built up, a great variety of people in different mental and spiritual attitudes will find their wants supplied.

Not only in a well built sermon is there apt to be more truth but the arrangement makes the truth more available. The hearer is liable to get hold of what is for him. Not infrequently sermons are like an old-fashioned country store, filled with goods all jammed in together so that the customer has difficulty in finding what he wishes and sometimes even the proprietor is puzzled. The attractiveness of a department store is not only in what it has for sale, but in the arrangements whereby you can find easily the particular thing you need. People will get more from a well planned sermon than from one with more in it but where truths, illustrations, applications are all jumbled in together. Alas! that we preach so many old-fashioned-country-store sermons! Beware of them. Much truth well arranged and available is possible and probable with a good steel structure in the sermon.

### Opportunity

We sometimes rebel against a definite sermon plan because illustrations, imaginative conceptions, applications we would like to use are evidently out of place and we feel that our freedom is restricted. Plans indeed do compel the selective process and hamper the freedom of carelessness and indolence; but when we really mean business, plans increase opportunity. With a steel frame the walls of a building may be of wood, or brick, or marble, or brown stone, or concrete, or even glass. The roof may be

flat or peaked; it may have a façade or tower; the color scheme may be artistic or devoid of distinction. The steel structure instead of limiting gives the widest opportunity in the finishing details. Not less is this true of a fixed structure for a sermon. Instead of decreasing it multiplies the possibilities in style and finishing material. The imagination will have more points of vantage for its flights. The illustration or anecdote instead of being a suggestion or a bit of relaxation becomes the crown and climax of a great and distinct truth. The emotional appeal will leap forth like a lighthouse flash reflected from the great thought back of it. Epigrams and alliterations that grow very tiresome in a sermon given over to them adorn massive and masterful thought. Practical applications have point and power. Whatever is appropriate is doubly effective when part of a well fashioned structure.

Make, for example, a rigid structure for the text, " But desire earnestly the greater gifts." Take as a theme, " The Training of Hunger," and as the three points, 1. The Body; 2. The Mind; 3. The Soul. Under each point have two sub-points; A. The Foolish Way; B. The Wise Way. What mental gift, what art of expression, what spiritual ideal is excluded here? Humor, scorn, pathos could here find a mark. Memory, imagination, emotion would have place for their treasures. Trenchant phrases, poetical quotations, dramatic allusions would fit in many places. Ethical and spiritual ideals would be in demand and the Bible would shape and adorn at

every point. After all he who erects careful thought structures will have larger freedom and more opportunities than the preacher who follows his homiletical whims.

### Facility

The erection of a steel structure is no easy task, but when that is once done the completion presents few difficulties. Brick, or wood, or glass is lifted and placed in orderly fashion, and the finishing work progresses naturally. This perhaps is the greatest advantage that the structural preacher has. When the frame is finished he knows that the hardest part is done and is sure that he has something for Sunday. Anxiety lessens, and he works with more confidence and spirit. The gathered material is quickly sorted and almost finds its place itself. Let him take the Transfiguration, with the theme "Christ's Comrades in Glory," and the structure 1. The Three Witnesses; 2. The Two Visitors; 3. The One Celestial Voice; or the eighth Psalm with the theme "Contrasted Natures;" 1. Star Nature; 2. Animal Nature; 3. Human Nature; 4. Divine Nature, and how easily the details will work themselves out. Even plans as simple as these, and much more those that are original and striking, invite thoughts, illustrations, quotations and applications.

### Making the Steel Structures

It certainly pays to have a good thought structure for almost every sermon; but some think it hard or fail to get good results. Such should use often the

balanced structure with two contrasted points. Almost every Bible character can best be treated in this way. For example, 1. Martha as a Warning; 2. Martha as an Example. Many of the incidents, such as the Feeding of the Five Thousand, can be considered, 1. The Disadvantages; 2. The Advantages. Others, such as Solomon's Glory or Peter's Denial develop best with the structure, 1. The Causes; 2. The Results. Christ used this balanced structure frequently in his parables — The Virgins, The Sheep and Goats, The Two Sons, The Prodigal Son and the Elder Brother, The Wheat and the Tares. The great British preacher, Frederick W. Robertson, seldom used any other form. It probably makes the greatest impression on the human mind because it always gives the opportunity for contrast with the ensuing clearness. Then perhaps it has that natural interest which we feel when we watch contestants, whether teams, individuals or ideas. Of course the two ideas must be kin while contrasted. Most structureless sermons with very little work could be changed into one of these balanced sermons with a great increase not only of interest but also of power.

The traditional " Three Points " appeal in many cases to the people and aid the preacher. Many subjects thus naturally divide themselves — Father, Son, Spirit; Body, Mind, Soul; Home, Country, Church; Cause, Nature, Results; Why? When? Where?; Past, Present, Future; For, Against, Neutral, etc. It is possible however to have three points

but no real structure, three shacks but no building. They must be on one foundation and under the same roof. These disconnected sermonettes are to some a real temptation. The people may not know what the trouble is but the discourse as a whole produces a confused impression. If, however, the three parts form one structure, clear, logical, convincing, even untrained minds can grasp a difficult subject.

The fourfold sermon can be used occasionally, but it must be natural or else many will fail to comprehend. They will remember one, or two, or three of the points, but missing part will lose most of it. Beyond that it is not wise to go. A sermon with five or more heads seldom grips the hearer or makes a deep or definite impression. The ordinary building without an elevator may have three or even four stories; but it is not apt to be a financial success if it has more. In human thought the printing press is the elevator. If the sermon is for print five or more stories of thought may be made effective, but if the mind depends on hearing a rapid recital four lines of thought is the outside limit.

What of the sub-topics in a sermon? Never should numerals be used except for the main points. First and second under the " First Point " invariably bring confusion. Ordinarily in each division there should be introduced and elaborated additional thoughts. They may be distinct and should give the impression that the sermon is progressing in thought, but their subordinate and supplementary character should be made very evident. The greater the num-

ber and importance of these the more boldly should the main points be made to stand out.

Whatever advantages there may be in any sermon, they will be enhanced if the hearer perceives a clear thought structure. Often this one feature makes the difference between an ineffective and an effective sermon.

## DOOR AND DOME

MANY of the world's famous ecclesiastical structures owe their distinction largely to their domes: — St. Paul's in London, St. Peter's in Rome, St. Sophia in Constantinople, the Taj Mahal in India. Similarly the decorations on the roof of the Milan Cathedral and the Spires of Westminster Abbey give them prominence and preeminence. In marked contrast to these and yet beautiful in their simplicity and significance are the graceful slender church spires which crown many a New England hill.

The door is a humbler and less conspicuous factor and yet often is significant. Who can approach the Cathedral at Cologne and mount the steps to the entrance without a profound feeling of awe. The bronze doors at the Baptistry in Florence and many others challenge attention and admiration. In other realms the entrance may appeal or repel. How often the inexpressible charm of a cottage lies in its vine covered approaches, its hospitable veranda and its welcoming door.

A doorless and roofless building is worth little or nothing. This statement cannot be made in as sweeping a fashion of a sermon, for often a sermon without introduction and conclusion has real value; but still it pays the preacher in building his ecclesi-

astical structure to give careful attention to the door of the sermon and to its dome.

## The Door

The need of an introduction is apparent. The preacher's mind has been on the subject of the sermon for days, perhaps weeks or months. He is near it but his hearers are almost all far away in their thoughts. The subject may be one that had not been in their minds for a long time. Perhaps it had never occurred to them, at any rate in the phase that the preacher will present.

In response to the telephone ring you discover that a friend has arrived in your city from a distant place. "Can't you come over and spend some time with me?" The answer is: "Where are you? How can I get to you?" Then you tell him the section of the city where you are, your street and number and direct him how to reach you. Later as he mounts the steps you fling wide the door and bid him come in. The object of the introduction is to get the hearer in the same place with the preacher, no matter how far away from the subject of the sermon his mind may have been.

There is a wide choice in the selection of introductions. The setting of the text may be given revealing its significance; the meaning of the leading words and phrases, as used in this connection, may be explained; the reason for the choice of this particular text may be disclosed; reference may be made

to the theme, showing its pertinence at this time; a personal experience may be recounted or an incident narrated that would tend to arouse an interest in the subject; something may be said to remove possible prejudices, to give a point of view from which the subject may be seen better, or to arouse curiosity.

The introduction should be simple, without great thoughts, without emotional appeal, without dramatic intensity, without brilliant literary adornments. The imagination, however, may be used often to advantage in bringing the scene or setting clearly before the people. The simpler the better.

It should also be interesting. If the introduction is dull, many will conclude that the sermon will be the same and they pay no further attention to it. It is difficult to regain the attention which is lost in the first five minutes. Many years ago I heard a prominent Presbyterian minister begin his sermon something after this fashion: "As I was walking down Fulton Street a few days ago I saw some men digging a ditch across the street. As I passed, one of the men caught my attention and I went over where he was working. He stopped a moment and looked up at me, and I said to him, &c." Everybody in that congregation was now listening and continued to listen as he narrated his conversation with that man which led to the theme upon which he was to preach. He had succeeded in introducing us all to his subject.

In my boyhood home in Constantinople, the garden was surrounded by a stone wall two feet thick,

from ten to fifteen feet high, and the entering doors were huge, heavy and locked. There was a fine garden inside but none ever saw it, except the few who rang the bell and waited for admission. Introductions may be so built with learned phrases, great thoughts, ponderous propositions, with material better suited for foundations, as to keep the people from desiring to enter the preacher's garden, even though like ours in Constantinople it is filled with fig trees and flowers, pomegranates and grapevines. Some introductions are doors that keep people out of the sermon and some get them in to spend a half hour with the preacher and his thoughts. Simple, clear, interesting, bringing the people to the place where they can see the subject from his standpoint, is what an introduction should be.

## The Dome

The conclusion is usually the least satisfactory part of the sermon. When my students preach before their classmates it is seldom that the conclusion receives commendation. In ordinary church services a frequent complaint is that the preacher was too long. "His terminal facilities are not good" is a very, very common criticism.

There are several reasons for this. The people's attention, after listening for half an hour, more or less, has commenced to flag. The preacher also is growing tired. Moreover in his preparation he spent so much time on the first part of the sermon or

other things that he did not have enough to put on the conclusion.

The conclusion is a much more difficult piece of work than the introduction. A minister may select any one of several introductions equally good, but the conclusion must be pertinent to the entire sermon to be really effective. There is only one good one. You may make your piazza small or large, high or low, but your roof or dome must conform to the structure of the building.

Then, too, defects are more serious. Second rate work on the steps, piazza and door may be annoying but no great harm is done, but a defective, leaky roof, alas! Here the best workmanship is absolutely requisite. Any sort of a carpenter can build a piazza, but only a limited number can be trusted with the roof, a specialist is needed for a spire, and a great dome calls for genius.

A good conclusion is very difficult but very desirable. It must rest squarely over the sermon, not necessarily summarizing it, but it should not swing off to one side, should not introduce new material. Equally important is it, perhaps more important, that the heart of the conclusion should be the purpose of the sermon. That should dominate the closing words. If the people have not perceived it before, they should realize it now, and it should be the passion in the soul of the preacher.

Here as never before in the sermon also intensity should be an outstanding feature. Indifference, hesitation, the merely contemplative spirit, simply in-

intellectual interest invite failure. Whether the aim of the sermon is toward the emotions of the people or not, the soul of the preacher should be deeply stirred. Into this he must throw himself unrestrainedly.

The appeal must be made personal, personal to every one in the congregation. Though his sermon commenced with men and events of two thousand years ago it must end in the lives of the people in that room. " Thou art the man " must be its dominant note.

If poetry is introduced, it must consist of only a few lines. If a quotation is inserted, it must be brief and telling. If an illustration or story is given it must be short and dramatic. The action must be swift. The sermon must close with a burst of spiritual fervor. This is the place for a climax, whether it be subdued solemnity or forceful appeal. Nothing ornate is permissible, nothing for display, but it should rise high above all, in a spiritual pointing heavenward — a spire, a dome.

## FORMS AND FIGURES AND FINISHING TOUCHES

Visit a man who has recently purchased a home and notice his enthusiasm over his new possession. He points with pride not to the foundations, the beams, the cubic capacity of the various rooms, but to the grain of the wood, the designs on the wall paper, the electric light fixtures, the fireplaces, and the like. It is very probable that these features and furnishings led him to select this house in preference to others. I have heard more than one builder complain bitterly of the quick sales of a rival's houses, though far inferior in material and structure to his, because of a liberal supply of fancy features. There can be no doubt that finishing touches determine largely the demand for a house. They also affect its desirability. The position of the windows, the arrangement of the rooms, the location of the doors, of the stairs, of the light fixtures, of the closets, of the radiators, deserve and receive consideration.

An earnest minister with a message may resent emphasis on forms, figures and finishing touches as unduly exalting the incidental and superficial; but they are great factors in settling the all important question as to whether the people will accept what we build and offer. We must endeavor to be not only

builders but also architects and artists. Why do churches reject candidates because of their grammatical errors? Why do people stop listening to a sermon because it moves on evenly without ripple and sparkle? For the same reasons that we do not select a muddy scow and go paddling in a canal. Most would choose a canoe in a sparkling stream, or nothing.

Of the many features in sermonizing which may be made real factors in inducing people to accept the truth offered a few deserve special emphasis.

### The Interrogation

No single literary device that is within easy reach of every public speaker can accomplish so much as the interrogation. Hundreds of affirmations following each other in unbroken succession make a sermon dull, like a lake without a ripple. A few questions, effectively inserted, will bring to it sparkle and motion and life and make it interesting and refreshing. It arouses the drowsy mind. It often creates a challenge. Newman Hall, in his sermon on "Christian Victory" thus transforms a passage from the commonplace to the dramatic and thrilling. Referring to a number of difficult achievements, instead of saying "It is not easy to do this," "It is not easy to do that," . . . . . he cries out "Easy? To crucify the flesh," . . . "Easy? To be in the world . . . ?" "Easy? . . . . . .

Inserting a question before an affirmation, thus

making it an answer is the simplest possible device for regaining the lost attention of a congregation but one of the most effective, especially if there be a moment's pause after the question.

Asking a question and leaving to the minds of the people the answering of it constitutes a challenge that stimulates thought. If wisely handled it is often more effective than a positive statement. A slanderer can injure a man's standing with a friend more by an insinuating question than by a direct charge. This applies equally to the truth. A hearer who would reject your statement of a truth might formulate it for himself if asked the question and left alone. Unanswered questions do not antagonize as do positive affirmations.

Very effective often, also, is a succession of questions, carrying conviction with their cumulative effect.

Of course the use of the interrogation may be carried to an extreme. Too much of it, especially too many unanswered questions, tends to give an impression of weakness. The affirmative sentence constitutes the real strength of a sermon, but there are few discourses that would not hold the attention better and make more of an impression by the judicious insertion of a score of questions.

### The Exclamation

Instead of being an artificial device the exclamation is at the same time the most natural form of

speech and the most neglected by the average preacher. The tendency of the human being to use exclamations appears in the widespread use of profanity, of slang and various ejaculations. Even the old New England saints were accustomed to "Oh! Goodness me!" and "For Pity's Sake!" Listen to a group of people anywhere as they talk and see how much of exclamation there is.

Orators use it. Jesus employed it freely especially in the expression "Verily! Verily!". "Behold." and "Oh!" often appear in the Bible. It cannot be used as generally as the interrogation which is intellectual while the exclamation is emotional. There is always danger of its dropping into the realm of slang. In the climaxes of the sermon, however, it may arouse and thrill as nothing else can. Because the number of exclamations is limited, there is great danger of using the same one so frequently as to rob it of its value. As a rule, the shorter it is the better. It is seldom that a long sentence can be uttered as an exclamation in a way to make it effective. Even better than a short sentence is a phrase and often a single word is the most telling of all.

## Quotations

Quotations are usually either abused or neglected. The minister who preaches written sermons and the one who is endowed with a remarkable memory are apt to use them too much. There are so many books supplying quotable material of all sorts that there

is a great temptation for such to use them as the easiest kind of filling. This habit grows upon some men until they overload their sermons and people begin to wonder if they have any ideas of their own and question whether it is not a lazy man's way of preaching.

On the other hand most of those with poor verbal memories who preach unwritten sermons go to the other extreme and make a mistake in neglecting the use of quotations. They, of course, find some difficulty in introducing them naturally. I recently heard a man use in his morning's sermon four excellent quotations. He had the four books, one of which was the manual for responsive reading, on a desk beside him and when he wished the quotation he picked up the book, turned to the page and read it. This, however, diverted the attention too much and broke the continuity of his discourse, especially in the instance when he had difficulty in finding the place. By far the best method is to write the quotations on a big sheet of paper, in a large hand and place it on the pulpit so that it can be read with a glance, without raising the paper or bending the head. This is easy if the preacher has previously made himself perfectly familiar with it.

A quotation must be able to justify itself in one of two ways. Otherwise it should be excluded. If the author is one whose name has weight with the congregation the quotation may be a real asset. If he is unknown to them or not highly regarded by

them, little or nothing is gained, no matter what the preacher may think of him. The other sufficient reason is that the quotation expresses the idea in an unusually effective way, in terseness, dramatic form, emotional expression or some other way. It must utter the idea with more of beauty and strength than any original expression of the preacher could supply. This applies especially to poetry. Unless it be the presentation of facts or an argument it is doubtful whether much is gained by a quotation in a sermon of more than fifty words of prose or a dozen lines of poetry. A long poem seems like a recitation for display or entertainment and detracts from the sermon. Long prose quotations, from the Bible or elsewhere, suggest padding. It is a wise policy to examine the quotation and discover what is the portion vital to this sermon, and to use little more than that. It is often wise, moreover, to dovetail the quotation into the sermon, with a few explanatory words before it.

Much also is gained by driving home the application with a few quick sharp sentences after it. Especially is this desirable where otherwise the pertinence of the quotation would not appear.

A brother minister who uses quotations frequently and with great skill in his sermons does not attempt to give the names of the poets from whom he quotes. He says that people will assume that he is quoting. When, however, it is prose, he indicates either the author or at any rate that it is a quotation lest he be charged with plagiarism.

## Illustrations

It would need a rarely gifted preacher and a congregation of unusual mentality to secure the best sermonic results without illustrations. They are as important to a sermon as the windows to a house. They let the light in. They enable people to see clearly. The number and size must be determined by the subject under consideration. Some ministers use altogether too many and build greenhouses. Nobody wishes to live in a greenhouse or stay there long. Excessive indulgence is likely when the preacher is inclined to use stories. There would not be much left of some discourses if the stories were cut out. Why call them sermons? There is also the danger of using several illustrations for one point, drawing them from different domains. It is about as sensible as putting in double windows, or triple, or quadruple windows in summer. They keep out as well as let in.

Illustrations originating with the preacher are undoubtedly the most effective — the things that he has experienced, observed, been told or read, provided, however, they do not call more attention to him than to the subject. Illustrations may be gathered from all sources and it is not necessary nor often desirable to give the source. Illustrations are common property.

To introduce them because they are interesting, or help fill up the time, or happen to come to the mind

is a mistake. An illustration that does not clarify is apt to mist-i-fy. If nothing worse happens it is sure to divert the mind from the point at issue. Here is where humor finds a legitimate place in a sermon. If it is used simply to entertain, or to win favor, or to display wit and cleverness it is utterly out of place; but if it throws light on the subject, if it can be followed swiftly by a quick, keen application to the truth under consideration, it is a valuable addition. In the same way irony, sarcasm, ridicule as expressions of resentment and bitterness do more harm than good; but if they can bring something into a clearer light, if they in their way illustrate a reality, they are legitimate and may be beneficial; but rather dangerous and to be used rarely.

Three simple rules are the best guides in the use of illustrations. The first is brevity. It is surprising how much of an illustration can be cut out without losing its value as an illustration. In fact the more irrelevant material is stripped from it, the better illustration does it make. The second is pertinence. If it does not exactly fit, it becomes like unadjusted opera glasses which dim so that the eyes can see better without them. The third is that they should be drawn from various sources. Here is a weakness common to us all. One draws all his illustrations from the Bible, another from nature, another from science, another from literature, another from personal experiences, and so on. We need to watch ourselves and search for illustrations in regions from which we have not been drawing any.

The mind forms habits easily, so that the more we use illustrations the more freely will they come to us.

## Forceful and Felicitous Phrasing

The stately oratorical style, the ornate flowery style, and the epigrammatic, sententious style of preaching have largely passed out of vogue. Because of this, and because so many men now do not write out their sermons or, if they do, write rapidly and make only one draft, the tendency is to swing to the other extreme. An increasing number of sermons abound, if not in grammatical errors, in slipshod sentences, clumsy expressions, with a style that might fairly be designated as ramshackle. I once secured a skillful stenographer to take down my sermons and give me the rescript unchanged in any particular. When I read it I threw up my hands in despair. Was it possible that my pulpit style scrawled like that?

The average American preacher is likely to be below par in this respect more than in any other. We all, however, appreciate it, when we listen to a sermon in which the vocabulary is rich, the phrases correct and telling, and the sentences clear, concise and trenchant. An occasional epigram stirs with its flash. A balanced sentence drives a truth home. An alliteration arouses a fading attention and a terse saying is riveted in the memory.

There are two ways to improve in this respect. Find and memorize and repeat aloud sentences of

the style that you wish to incorporate in your preaching, not for use there, but that your mind and ear may instinctively encourage them as you speak extemporaneously. Then keep making them yourself, not for any particular sermon, but just as practice. Sometimes write them out and read them to yourself aloud. Spend a few minutes each day in extemporizing them. In time you will find your style unconsciously responding and spontaneously producing better sentences.

### The Imagination

Flights of fancy, picturing the unreal and the impossible, Arabian Nights Entertainment and everything of that sort belong elsewhere, not in sermons. There are, however, several ways in which the imagination is especially valuable in preaching.

(a) The imagination, which enables the preacher to put himself in another's place, so that he can understand his feelings, look at things from his point of view and anticipate his thoughts and motives, is of greatest value. " That other man " may be in his congregation or one whose history is recorded in the Bible. In the latter case he has the added task of enabling the congregation to put themselves in the other's place.

(b) An imagination which enables a man to follow his own words and actions and realize what reaction they will produce, how they will make others feel, is needed. The unimaginative man is con-

tinually surprised at the results of what he says and does and he cannot understand why others take him as they do.

(c) A third form is more intellectual and perhaps more rare. It enables a man to see a truth or fact in its relation to other facts and truths. A mariner seeing a smokestack and masts rising out of the water instantly pictures in his mind the wrecked steamer below the surface. Some preachers look at everything as through a telescope or microscope. They can see only one thing at a time, and they lack the imagination which would enable them to realize the whole while looking at one part.

(d) There are some forms that are of special homiletical value. One is the ability to see the scene described in the Bible as vividly as if some artist had placed on the page a painting of it. To some this comes easily, but others must make constant effort to visualize. Then comes the effort to make the congregation see it. T. De Witt Talmage, one of the popular preachers of thirty or forty years ago, whose sermons were printed in the Monday morning dailies all over the country as no other man's sermons ever have been, had this ability to a marked degree. I once sat on the platform near him, as he was addressing a convention on Rescue Mission Work and was arraigning those who refused to help the struggling sinner. He pictured an imaginary scene of a shipwreck, with some people on a raft while others were struggling in the raging sea. When these last tried to clamber on the raft its occupants pushed them

back lest their own safety should be endangered. So vividly did he picture the scene, that the great congregation faded from before my eyes and I saw that terrible sight and nothing else. I can see it now, so realistic did he make it.

All have not the power of Talmage but the gift can be cultivated. I had a student in one of my homiletic classes who pictured the healed demoniac at Gadara standing on a crag as he watched the receding ship until he could no longer distinguish the form of his healer, and did it so vividly that I cannot read that story now without seeing him standing there.

It is entirely legitimate to allow the imagination to introduce features into a Bible narrative that are not recorded there but that might have easily occurred. Especially is this true of soliloquies and conversations. I have heard some that seemed so natural, so perfectly in accord with the whole context and the characters and all that was reported that I have felt like looking it up to see if it really was not there, and if I had forgotten it.

Of course this can be abused, as when things that could not possibly have happened are described and conversations introduced contrary to the whole spirit of the narrative. Little imaginative touches often add much. Our Bible stories are two thousand or more years old and it is by the imagination that they must be brought to us and made real. They may be made interesting as mere history, but they rarely

become powerful without some touches of the imagination.

Not only in vitalizing Bible incidents, but in making real and vivid illustrations, stories, allusions of all sorts, is the imagination of great value. The first thing of course is to see it ourselves, and well may we sit with closed eyes and strive to see with our mind's eye the scene we are about to describe. An uncontrolled imagination is a calamity, but when it is made a servant and commanded to give a few light touches to a sermon, it may lift into life what otherwise would be dead.

The finishing touches take time. They are hard work. Sometimes we wonder whether they pay. But we value them in our homes, we wish them in our churches, they bring to us satisfaction wherever we see them. Let us, therefore, not neglect our sermons in this respect.

# POSTLUDE

## THE MINISTER'S CHRISTMAS

In innumerable American homes, as dawn breaks on Christmas, hastily-robed figures may be seen stealing about, each seeking to outstrip the others with the gleeful salutation "Merry Christmas." If little children are present, all gather about the Christmas stockings, with exclamations of delight as present after present is drawn from its concealment, while references to Santa Claus are made with wonder by the children and amusement by the adults. If the children are older, the presents are in packages piled around the foot of the Christmas tree; and if there are no children, the gifts appear at the breakfast table. What a joyful hour!

But who speaks or thinks of Him whose coming prompted all this gladness and giving?

After breakfast, the re-examination of gifts, and the clearing away of wrappings, attention is turned to the next feature of the day: elaborate preparations for the dinner, if the family reunion is to be held in this home, or plans for the journey if it is to be in one of the others. The tables are loaded with good things, the chairs are crowded to make room for all and the fun flows fast and free, with kindly looks and words from each for all, and with heart longings for the absent ones.

But is there no room for Him whose birthday it is?

As the day continues, the elders chat, the girls and boys romp, the young people indulge in outdoor sports, or seek places of public amusement, or gather in congenial social groups. Happiness continues to the end of a perfect day.

But where is He that is born King of the Jews, our King?

The wise men from the East must have been surprised, after they had followed from afar the star of the king of the Jews, to discover the absence of all interest in him among the Jews. Would not a similar journey to this land, with Christmas spent in visiting American homes, create equal surprise at the widespread lack of interest in the King on the King's birthday?

Often is repeated the phrase, "Hamlet with Hamlet left out," but there is no record of the acting or printing of that play with the omission of the words and experiences of its chief character; but Christmas without Christ is so common as almost to be taken for granted as the regulation observance of the day. The celebration of the birthday of a friend or relative in a manner that utterly ignored him would seem very strange, but Christ's birthday is observed by multitudes with no ascription of praise to him, no earnest prayer for his unseen presence, no meditation on the meaning of his birth, even without any perceptible recognition that it is his day.

It is true that he is remembered on the nearest Sunday, but we do not thus shunt the birthdays of our children. If the day were not observed at all the nearest Sunday would do, but to observe it so heartily and then to ignore him so completely, seems a marked dishonor. Some churches indeed hold religious services on Christmas, but these services are not attended as on Easter, and in them his death rather than his birth seems to be emphasized, with sacrament and mass. Even some stalwart champions of the dogma of the Virgin Birth, on the day set apart for the recognition of that event, seem to give no thought to the virgin, the birth, or the spiritual and eternal significance of the day.

Is not, however, the day filled with the Christ spirit? Somewhat, but not supremely. The Christ spirit is to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, minister to the afflicted, and rescue the lost rather than to give gifts to those who give to us and to urge the choicest viands on those who already have enough.

But is not Christ pleased to behold his own so happy on his birthday? Assuredly he is. He rejoices with them that rejoice. Not one feature of a truly happy Christmas would he have omitted; but is it well for us to treat him so? Not that we should omit aught of these joyous experiences, but we should add thereto more honoring and loving recognition of him with worship at sunrise, thanksgiving

at eventide and meditation on the meaning of the angel's message.

Many of us have tried to arouse an interest in an observance of the day which would place Christ on the throne, but tradition and custom are strong. It is well nigh impossible to gather the people in many of our churches, to give thanks and join in Christmas worship, on Christmas morning; and even in family gatherings references to Christ are received with respectful acquiescence rather than eager welcome.

Instead of a futile struggle to enlist others in a true observance of the day or of a disappointed surrender to the seemingly inevitable neglect, may we ministers not find here an opportunity for a peculiar spiritual privilege for ourselves? On all other significant occasions our efforts must be exerted to interest and inspire others. Let us welcome this day as a special gift to us. We need it. You often have seen a hostess so intent upon preparing food for her guests and serving them that when they had departed she found herself faint and exhausted because she had neglected to partake herself of the food provided. So at times we lack even as we prepare and pass the bread of life to others. As Christ withdrew into silent solitude for meditation, for the refreshment and strengthening of his own spirit, let each one of us on Christmas seek a spot outside the sound of human voices. The closet with its secrecy and the vast outdoor temple have advantages, but the best place, if it is possible,

is the church. The spirit, not the place of prayer, is the important factor, but nevertheless the place often affects the spirit; and what place of prayer is there for a minister like his own pulpit? Where he is wont to lead others to the throne of grace, he finds the most precious place for solitary prayer. What a place for him to meet Christ on Christmas! Now his pulpit is hallowed as never before.

Usually our meditations are the reaching out for messages to give our people. Our prayers are for the strength and guidance we need, or intercessions for the members of our flock, our community, our country or for the world that the Kingdom of heaven may come to all. Now let our meditations all be of Christ; not to secure aught from him but to see him and adore. With the shepherds, with the wise men, with Simeon and Anna, let us look and rejoice and praise and worship him. In silent thought or audibly, the words of the Christmas story we may repeat to ourselves. We may make our own that wondrous hymn and say again and again

"O holy child of Bethlehem
Be born in me today;
O come to me, abide in me,
My Lord Emmanuel."

Our meditations may be of his wondrous life and teachings, or the deep spiritual significance of his ministry, or the mystery of his incarnation and all its fruitage. It should be an hour with Jesus only.

By a "retreat" we usually mean a gathering of ministers apart by themselves for communion with each other and with God; but let this "Christmas retreat" be in his own pulpit alone with his Saviour, on that Saviour's birthday, in the sacred place where he is accustomed to proclaim the good news of that Saviour.

Many years ago in a foreign land, I visited a monastery, and as with a monk I was walking through a corridor, there came to my ears the mystic melodies of monks in their cells chanting their adoration. My thought at that time was that it would be far better for them to come forth and lead their fellow men in worship, and by example and precept incite them to live righteous lives and better the conditions of this sad and sinful world. I still think so; but now and then I seem to hear those voices again and they arouse a longing for such worship and communion, apart from the world and all its clamors. Let us not be afraid that we shall ever go too far in this direction, in this land and age. It is said of Elijah that in the strength of the food prepared for him as he sat under the juniper tree, he went forty days and forty nights. In the strength of what Christ might give us in an hour on Christmas day, in the church, in our own pulpits, we might be able to go far on our journey. If all of us ministers thus observed His birthday many of us would be blessed indeed, and to some it might prove the outstanding day of the whole year in spiritual vision and refreshment.

"Jesus, these eyes have never seen
That radiant form of thine;
The veil of sense hangs dark between
Thy blesséd face and mine.

"I see Thee not, I hear Thee not,
Yet art Thou oft with me;
And earth hath ne'er so dear a spot,
As where I meet with Thee.

"Like some bright dream that comes unsought
When slumbers o'er me roll,
Thine image ever fills my thought,
And charms my ravished soul.

"Yet though I have not seen, and still
Must rest in faith alone,
I love Thee, dearest Lord—and will,
Unseen, but not unknown.

"When death these mortal eyes shall seal,
And still this throbbing heart,
The rending veil shall Thee reveal,
All-glorious as Thou art."

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